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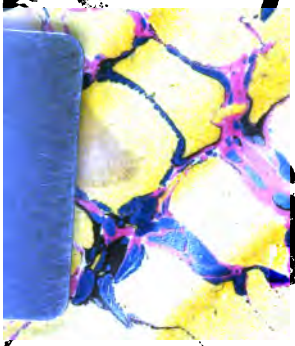

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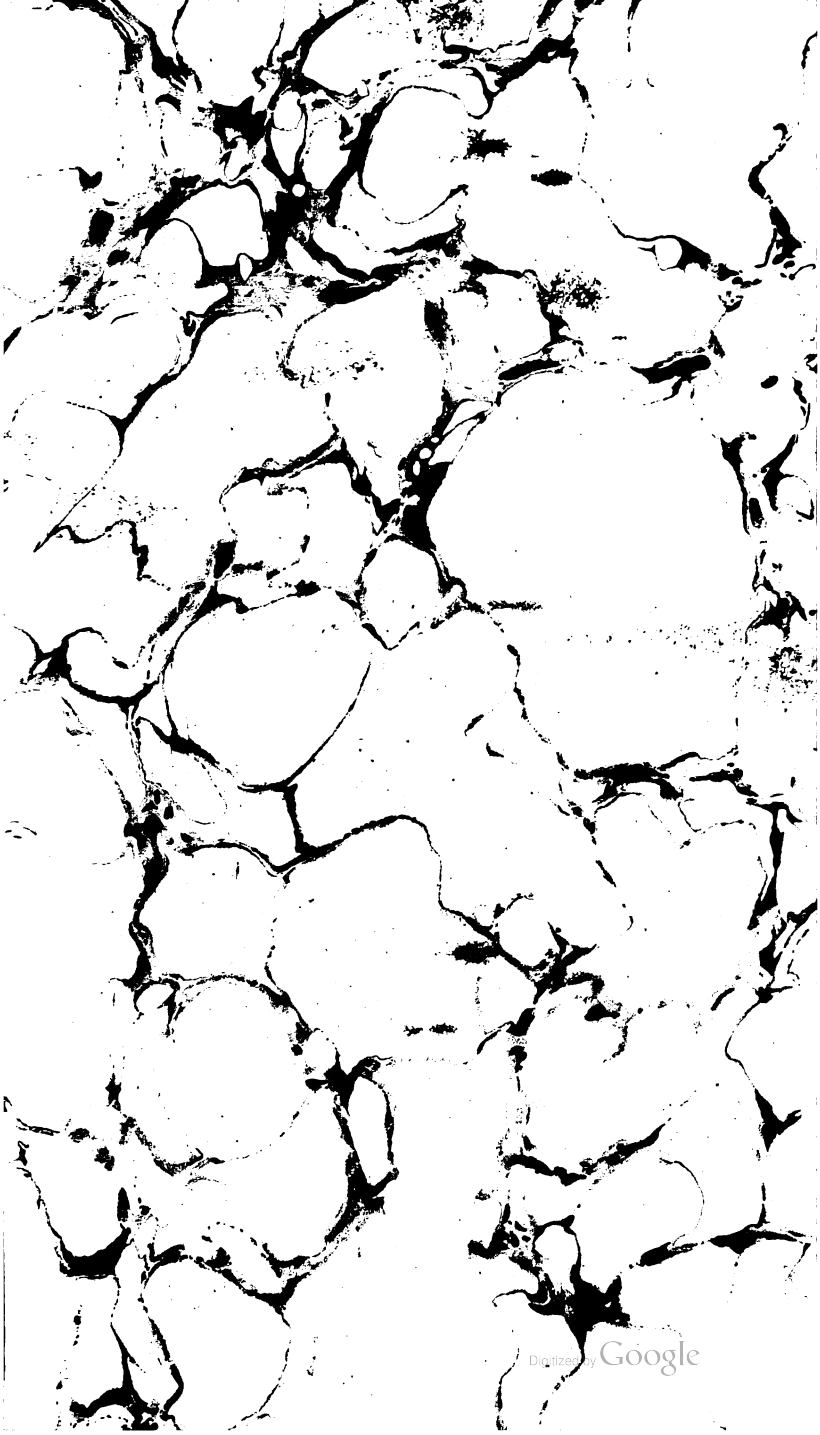
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CHRISTIAN

MORALS:

BY

HANNAH MORE.

In moral actions, Divine law helpeth exceedingly the law of Reason to guide a man's life; but in supernatural, it alone guideth. HOOKER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHRISTIAN MORALS.

CHAP. XIV.

On Retirement.

AN old French wit ſays, that "ambition itſelf might teach us to love retirement, . . there is nothing which ſo much hates to . . companions." Cowley corrects this ſentiment with one equally lively and more ſound, that "ambition, indeed, deteſts to have company on either ſide, but delights above all things in a train behind, and uſhers before." To ſeek therefore a retre a till we have got rid of this ambition, to fly to retirement as a ſcene of pleaſure or improvement, till the love of the world is eradicated from the heart; or at leaſt till this eradication is its predominant deſire, will only conduct the diſcontented mind to a long-

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train of freſh diſappointments, in addition to that ſeries of vexations of which it has ſo conſtantly complained in the world.

The amiable writer already referred to, who has as much unaffected elegance and good ſenſe in his proſe works, as falſe taſte and unnatural wit in his poetry, ſeems not to be quite accurate when he inſiſts in favour of his beloved ſolitude, that "a miniſter of ſtate has not ſo much buſineſs in public as a wiſe man has in private; the one," ſays he, "has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other has all the works of God and nature under his conſideration." But ſurely there is a manifeſt difference between our having great works under our conſideration, and having them under our controul. He aſſigns, indeed, high motives for the purpoſes of retreat, but he does not ſeem to aſſign the higheſt. Should he not have added, in conjunction with the objects he enumerates, what ſhould be the leading object of the retirement of the good, the ſtudy of his own heart, as well as of inanimate

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animate nature; of the word, as well as of the works of God?

He who has ſpent his life in the ſtudy of mankind, till he is weary both of the ſtudy and of its object, will, with a juſtly framed mind, be well prepared for retirement. He will delight in it as an occaſion for cultivating a more intimate acquaintance with his Maker and with himſelf. He will ſeek it not merely as the well-earned reward of a life of labour, but as a ſcene, which, while it advances his preſent comfort, furniſhes him with better means for preparing for a better life. We often hear of the neceſſity of being qualified for the world; and this is the grand object in the education of our children, overlooking the difficult duty of qualifying them for retirement. But if part of the immenſe pains which are taken to fit them for the company of others, were employed for fitting them for their own company, in teaching them the duties of ſolitude as well as of ſociety, this earth would be a happier place than it is; a training

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ſuitable to a world of ſuch brief duration, would be a better preparatory ſtudy for a world which will have no end.

Leiſure with dignity is a claſſic phraſe which carries to the taſte and to the heart the mingled ideas of repoſe, elegance, and literature. It is, indeed, an honourable ſtate of enjoyment. It has been ſung by the poet, and extolled by the philoſopher. Its delights have been echoed by thoſe who ſeek it, and by thoſe that ſhun it; by thoſe who deſire its poſſeſſion, and by thoſe who are ſatisfied with its praiſe; by thoſe who found their fondneſs on a happy experience, and by thoſe who had rather admire than enjoy it.

Tumult, indeed, is to be avoided as a great impediment to that interior peace, without which outward ſtillneſs is of little value. But let us bear in mind that it is more eaſy to eſcape from the tumult of the world than of the paſſions. Before, therefore, we expect immunity from care in our projected retreat, let us inquire what is our object

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object in retiring. We may deceive ourſelves in this purſuit as we have done in others. We may fancy we are retiring from motives of religion, when we are only ſeeking a more agreeable mode of life. Or we may be flying from duty, when we fancy we are flying from temptation. We may flatter ourſelves we are ſeeking the means of piety, when we are only running away from the perplexities of our ſituation; from trials which make, perhaps, a part of our duty. To diſlike theſe is natural; to deſire to eſcape from them is innocent, generally laudable. Only let us not perſuade ourſelves that we are influenced by one motive when we are acting from another. The deſign may be even good, but let us not deceive ourſelves with the idea of its being better than it is. Let us not boaſt that we are making a ſacrifice to duty, when we are conſulting, however innocently, our own eaſe or convenience. In retreating into the country for peace of mind, the temper you would find you muſt carry thither. Thoſe

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who retire on no other principle but to eſcape trouble without turning their leiſure to the benefits it is calculated to impart, are happy only on the low condition of being uſeleſs. If we retire upon the motive of "Soul, take thine eaſe," though neither covetouſneſs nor ſenſuality be the prompting principle, if our object be a ſlothful indulgence, a retirement which does not involve benefit to others, as well as improvement to ourſelves, we fail of the great purpoſe for which we came into the world, for which we withdraw from it.

But while we advert to the higheſt object as the beſt, we are far from inſinuating that the taſte, eſpecially ſo right a taſte, may not be indulged from motives of an inferior nature; far from thinking that we are not juſtified in preferring a tranquil to a buſtling ſcene, and adopting a more rational, even if it be not a more religious plan of life. There is ſomething almoſt like virtue in the good taſte which prefers it; only, that as in intellectuals, good taſte muſt have its ſubſtratum in good ſenſe, ſo in morals it ſhould have

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have its ſubſtratum in principle. But if any one thinks that merely by retiring from the world, he ſhall get rid of his own evil tempers, ſolitude is the worſt choice he could make. It may, indeed, through the grace of God, be made eventually beneficial: for though his interior burthen, ſo far from being lightened, will be more oppreſſively felt, yet its very oppreſſiveneſs, by leading him to look into the cauſe, may lead to its removal; he may be drawn to religion to get rid of himſelf, as he was driven to retirement to get rid of his cares.

No ſecond cauſes act but by the direction of the firſt. The viſible works of God, though ſo admirably calculated to ſtir up devotion in the heart, have not commonly, eſpecially when habit makes them familiar, been found to produce this effect. Some of the ſchool divines made a juſt diſtinction, when they compared inanimate and intelligent beings, in reference to the ſupreme Creator, by ſaying that the one only exhibit

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hibit the footſteps of God while the other repreſent his face.

It was worthy of the munificence of omnipotent Bounty, not only to ſpread the earth with a rich profuſion of whatever is neceſſary and pleaſant to animal life, but with whatever might invite to contemplative and intellectual life; not only to ſuſtain but to gratify; not only to nouriſh but to improve: by endleſs variety, awakening curioſity, and by curioſity exciting reſearch. The country is favourable to the ſtudy of natural hiſtory; furniſhing both the leiſure and the materials. It ſets the mind upon thinking, that if the objects of God's creation are ſo wonderful, *Himſelf how wondrous then!*

The mind, indeed, which is looking out for good, finds "ſermons in ſtones, and good in every thing." To minds of an oppoſite make, uſe deſtroys the effect, even if novelty had produced it. Little habituated to reflection, they ſoon learn to behold a grove of oaks with no higher feeling than a ſtreet of ſhops, and are as little ſoothed with

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with the murmurs of a rivulet, as with the clatter of hackney coaches. Where ſloth predominates in the character, we are diſpoſed to conſider the retreat from which we had promiſed ourſelves ſo much advantage, as furniſhing a refuge for idleneſs rather than a place for reflection. If vanity and vivacity predominate, we ſhall value the loveliеſt ſcenery we have been embelliſhing, rather as means to attract company and commendation, than as a help to aſſiſt our better thoughts, and lift our hearts to holy aſpirations.

Though piety is no local thing, yet it has locality. That being is but a bad authority whom Milton makes proudly to exclaim, "The mind is its own place," and the Stoics carried their haughty mental independence too far, in aſſerting that local circumſtances made no difference in the condition of man. Retirement is aſſuredly favourable to the advancement of the beſt ends of our being. There the ſoul has freer means of examining into its own ſtate, and its de-

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pendence upon God. It has more unobſtructed leiſure for enjoying with its Maker,

Communion, ſweet communion, large and high.

It has ampler means for reiterating the conſecration of its powers and faculties to him who gave them, than it could eaſily find in thoſe broken ſnatches and uncertain intervals which buſier ſcenes afforded. But then we muſt be brought into a ſtate and condition to reap benefit from retreat. The paralytic might as reaſonably expect to remove his diſeaſe by changing his poſition, as the diſcontented to allay the unruly motions of a diſtempered mind merely by retiring into the country.

A great ſtateſman, whom many of us remember, after having long filled a high official ſituation with honour and ability, began at length impatiently to look forward to the happy period when he ſhould be exonerated from the toils of office. He pathetically lamented the inceſſant interruptions which diſtracted him, even in the intervals

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tervals of public buſineſs. He repeatedly expreſſed to a friend of the Author, how ardently he longed to be diſcharged from the oppreſſive weight of his ſituation, and to conſecrate his remaining days to repoſe and literature. At length one of thoſe revolutions in party, which ſo many deſire, and by which ſo few are ſatisfied, transferred him to the ſcene of his wiſhes. He flew to his rural ſeat, but he ſoon found that the ſources to which he had ſo long looked, failed in their power of conferring the promiſed enjoyment; his ample park yielded him no gratification but what it had yielded him in town, without the preſent drawback; there he had partaken of its veniſon without the incumbrance of its ſolitude. His Hamadryads, having no diſpatches to preſent, and no votes to offer, ſoon grew inſipid. The ſtillneſs of retreat became inſupportable: and he frankly declared to the friend above alluded to, that ſuch was to him the blank of life, that the only relief he ever felt was to hear a rap at the door. Though he had before gladly

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ſnatched the little leiſure of a hurried life for reading, yet when life became all leiſure, books had loſt their power to intereſt. Study could not fill a mind long kept on the ſtretch by great concerns in which he himſelf had been a prime mover. The hiſtory of other times could not animate a ſpirit habitually quickened by a ſtrong perſonal intereſt in actual events.—There is a quality in our nature ſtrongly indicative that we were formed for active and uſeful purpoſes. Theſe, though of a calmer kind, may be ſtill purſued in retirement under the influence of the only principle powerful enough to fill the heart which fancies itſelf emptied of the world. Religion is that motive yet quieting principle which alone delivers a man from perturbation in the world and inanity in retirement; without it, he will in the one caſe be hurried into impetuoſity, or in the other be ſunk into ſtagnation. But religion long neglected "will not come when you do call for it." Perhaps the noble perſon did not call.

It

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It is an obvious improvement in the taſte and virtue of the preſent day, that ſo many of our dictators retire, not to the *turf*, but to the *plough;* that they make an honourable and pleaſant exchange of the cares and vexations of political life for the tranquil and uſeful purſuits of agriculture. Such purſuits yield comparative repoſe, and produce poſitive good. Beſides this, the modern Cincinnatus will have the gratification of finding how much he has gained by the change in his choice of inſtruments, for he will ſee that "all ſheep and oxen, yea and all beaſts of the field," are far leſs perverſe, faithleſs, and intractable than the indocile human agents whom he has been ſo long labouring to break in and bring under the yoke.

But whatever he may have gained in theſe reſpects, if the philoſophical and political agriculturiſt do not make it part of his arrangement, as we hope he does, that the cultivation of perſonal piety ſhall divide his time and his thoughts with the culti-

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vation of his paternal acres, he will not find his own paſſions more tractable, his own appetites more ſubdued, his own tempers better regulated, becauſe the theatre in which they are exerciſed is changed from contentious ſenates to blooming meadows. There is no power in the loveliest ſcenery to give that character to the mind on which its peace depends. It is true his innocent occupations will divert ambition, but it requires a more powerful operation to cure it. Ambition is an intermittent: it may, indeed, be cooled, but without piety it will be cooled as the patient in an ague is cooled "in the well day between the two fits," he will be looking back on the fever he has eſcaped, and forward to that which he is anticipating. There is but one tonic powerful enough to prevent the return of the paroxyſm. He will find the peruſal of the Bible not leſs compatible than that of the Georgics with his intereſting occupation. While he is actually enjoying the lovely living images under which the inſpired writers repreſent the

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the moſt delightful truths of religion, he may realize the analogies intellectually, he may be, indeed, conducted "to green paſtures" and led beſide "the ſtill waters of comfort" in the higheſt ſenſe of thoſe beautiful metaphors.

What a bleſſing is it to mankind, when they, whoſe large domains confer on them ſuch extenſive local influence, give their views a wider range, and take in an ampler compaſs of beneficial patronage; when they crown their exertions for the public good by the pious education of their young dependants, by promoting the growth of Chriſtianity as aſſiduouſly as the breed of ſheep; by extending the improvement of the ſoil to the moral cultivation of thoſe whom Providence, having committed to their protection for that very purpoſe, will require it at their hands.

With the deepeſt gratitude to God, let it be obſerved how many of theſe great perſons, with a ſpirit more honourable to them than their coronets or any earthly diſtinc-

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tion, have ſtood forward as the avowed patrons of the noble Inſtitution for diſperſing the Bible into all countries, after having transfuſed it into every dialect of every language. When we conſider the object, and view the rapidity, and trace the ſucceſs, are we not almoſt tempted to fancy that we ſee the Angel in the Revelation flying in the midſt of heaven, carrying "the everlaſting Goſpel to preach unto them that dwell in the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people."*

It

* May an old and attached member of the Society for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge be allowed to offer her opinion (though irrelevant to the ſubject of this chapter), upon the complete eſtabliſhment of the argument in favour of the Bible Society, from its not injuring its venerable predeceſſor? It is now obvious, that the benefits of the new inſtitution are effected without detriment to the old, from its having excited freſh friends to its cauſe, and raiſed additional funds for its ſupport. Reaſoning indeed from analogy, Would the benefactor, whoſe means were competent to both, refuſe his patronage to the Middleſex Hoſpital becauſe he was already a ſubſcriber to St. George's?

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It is indeed a ſpectacle to warm the coldeſt and to ſoften the hardeſt heart, to behold men of the firſt rank and talents, ſtateſmen who have never met but to oppoſe each other, orators who have never ſpoken but to differ, each ſtrenuous in what it is preſumed he believes right, renouncing every interfering intereſt, ſacrificing every jarring opinion, forgetting all in which they differed, and thinking only on that in which they agree; each *reconciled to his brother and leaving his*

George's? When he ſaw that other contributors neither withdrew nor diminiſhed, but eſpecially when he ſaw that they augmented their bounty to the elder eſtabliſhment, would he not bid God ſpeed to the younger? Would he not rejoice that a new ſource was opened for healing *more* diſeaſes, for relieving *more* wants? In the diſtribution of the Bible, are not both inſtitutions ſtreams iſſuing from the ſame fountain of love, both flowing into the ſame ocean of good? If we may be allowed the application, "they are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame ſpirit;" "they are differences of adminiſtration, but it is the ſame God that worketh all in all.

gift

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gift at the altar, offering up every reſentment at the foot of the Croſs! There might be two opinions how men ſhould be governed, there can be but one—whether they ſhould be ſaved.

We ought not to doubt that a portion of that generous zeal with which they diſſeminate the word of life to others, will be exerted in increaſing their own perſonal acquaintance with it. To diſpenſe the grand inſtrument of ſalvation to others, forgetful of our own intereſt in it, is one of the few inſtances in which diſintereſtedneſs would be criminal: while here, to participate in the bleſſing we beſtow, is one of the rare occaſions in which ſelf-love is truly honourable. May we, without offence, without the remoteſt idea of any thing perſonal, hazard the obſervation, that it is poſſible to be made the inſtrument, not only of temporal, but eternal, good to others, without reaping ourſelves any advantage from the good we communicate?

It

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It might have ſupplied a theſis for diſputation among the whimſical ſubtleties of the old ſchool divines, which was the more blameable extreme, to poſſeſs the Bible ourſelves without imparting the bleſſing to others, or to communicate it to them without uſing it ourſelves. Unfortunately, however, this cauſe for caſuiſtry was cut ſhort, by their refuſing the Bible altogether to the laity.

I: is with reluctance we turn from ſubjects of grateful panegyric to thoſe preſented to us by the ſame claſs of ſociety for animadverſion. With regret we take leave of ſcenes enriched and dignified by the beneficial preſence and exertions of their lords, for the dreary proſpect of deſerted manſions and abdicated homes. To not a few of the rich and great, their magnificent houſes are rather a cumbrous appendage of grandeur, places to which ſtrangers reſort to admire the ſplendor of the proprietors, and the portraits of their anceſtors, than what Providence intended, a rich additional ingredient in

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in their own overflowing cup of bleſſings. Their ſeats are poſſeſſed without being enjoyed. They appear, indeed, to combine the advantages of retreat with thoſe of opulence. But it is only appearance. Do not too many of their owners ſtrive to diſpoſſeſs the ſcene of every attribute appended to it? Do they not chiefly derive what little they know of the charms of the country from the deſcriptions of the poet—of the diverſities of landſcape from the painters of the opera-ſcenes — of the delights of retirement from the moraliſt, the philoſopher, and, more frequently, the noveliſt? They contrive to transfer to their rural abodes every thing of the metropolis, except its buildings, and, to the metropolis, every moveable appendage of rural beauty. Like the imperial Roman glutton, who never taſted fiſh but at the fartheſt poſſible diſtance from the ſea, they enjoy the lovely products of the conſervatory glowing with every hue, and breathing every fragrance, anywhere but where they grow. The moſt exquiſite flowers yield little

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little delight till tranſported to the town-reſidence. There they exhale their ſweets amid ſmoky lamps, and waſte them on a fetid atmoſphere; exhauſting their beauties in the tranſient feſtivity of a ſingle night, inſtead of reſerving them to decorate retreat, and add one attraction more to the charms of home and the pleaſures of retirement.

With theſe perſonages, the principal change from town to country conſiſts in the difference between a park and a ſquare. They bring to one the ſame taſtes, the ſame amuſements, and the ſame inverſion of hours which they adopted in the other. They loſe the true enjoyment of both, by contriving that neither town nor country ſhall preſerve any diſtinct character of its own. To ſome, indeed, the ſplendid inheritance is conſidered as little more than a commodious inn in which to repoſe in their inceſſant migration from the capital to the watering-place, and from the chalybeate to the ſea; without having the too valid plea

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of attending the ſick, or being ſick themſelves.

But if we compare the domeſtic ſcenes from which they are hurrying, with the places to which they are reſorting, we are inclined to pity them on the ſcore of taſte, as much as on the loſs of enjoyment. A ſtranger to our manners, who had heard of the ſelf-denial which our religion enjoins, when he compared what they had quitted with what they are flying to, would naturally compliment them on the noble ſacrifice which he would conclude they had made to duty. He would admire the zeal which prompted the abandonment of ſuch pure for ſuch turbid pleaſures; he would admire the elevation of mind which could ſubmit to ſuch unimpoſed penance. When he followed them from the ſplendid manſion to the cloſe and incommodious reſidence, in which a crowded ſeaſon ſometimes immures the poſſeſſors of palaces; when he ſaw them renounce their blooming gardens, their ſtately woods, "trees worthy of Paradiſe," for unſhaded

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ſhaded walks or artificial awnings; their bowers and temples for the unſheltered beach, open to all the rage of the dog-ſtar; the dry, ſmooth-ſhaven green, for ſinking ſands rivalling the ſoil of Arabia, or burning gravel, which might emulate Queen Emma's ploughſhares, would he not exclaim in rapture, ſurely theſe heroic ladies ſubmit to ſuch privations, encounter ſuch hardſhips, make ſuch renunciations, from motives of the moſt ſublime ſelf-denial! Doubtleſs they crowd to theſe joyleſs abodes, becauſe they could find at home no diſtreſſes to be relieved, no innocence to be protected, no wrongs to be redreſſed, no ignorance to be inſtructed. Now, would he exultingly add, I have ſome practical experience of the ſacrifices of which diſintereſted piety is capable. The good they muſt be doing here is indeed a noble recompence for the pleaſures they are giving up.

Unimportant as this gradual revolution in our habits may be thought, there are few things which have more contributed to lower

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lower the tone both of ſociety and ſolitude, than theſe multiplied and ever multiplying ſcenes of intermediate and ſubordinate diſſipation. When the opulent divided the year between the town and country reſidence — the larger portion always aſſigned to the latter — being ſtationary in each, as they occupied a poſt of more obvious reſponſibility, they were more likely to fulfil their duties, than in theſe parentheſes between both. For theſe places, to perſons who only ſeek them as ſcenes of diverſion and not as recruits to health, are conſidered as furniſhing a ſort of ſuſpenſion from duty as well as an exoneration from care; the chief value of the pleaſures they afford conſiſting in their not being *home-made*.

We have little natural reliſh for ſerious things. It is one great aim of religion to cure this natural malady. It is the great end of diſſipated pleaſures to inflame it. Theſe pleaſures forcibly addreſs themſelves to the ſenſes, and thus, not only lower the taſte, but nearly efface the very idea of ſpiritual things. They gradually perſuade

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perſuade their votaries, that nothing but what they receive through *their* medium is real. Where the illuſions of ſenſe are allowed to make their full impreſſion, the pleaſures of religion appear merely viſionary; faint ſhadows at firſt, and afterwards unexiſting things.

If religion makes out certain pleaſures to be dangerous, theſe pleaſures revenge themſelves in their turn by repreſenting religion to be dull. They are adopted under the ſpecious notion of being a relief from more ſevere employments; whereas others leſs poignant would anſwer the end better, and exhauſt the ſpirits leſs. If the effect of certain diverſions only ſerves to render our return to ſober duties more reluctant, and the duties themſelves inſipid, if not irkſome — if we return to them as to that which, though we do not love, we dare not omit, it is a queſtion even in the article of enjoyment, whether we do not loſe more than we gain by any recreation which has the effect of

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rendering that diſguſting which might otherwiſe have been delightful.

But it is never too late for a change of ſyſtem, provided that change is not only *intended*, but *adopted*. We would reſpectfully invite thoſe who have been ſlaves to cuſtom, courageouſly to break their chain. Let them earneſtly ſolicit the aid which is from above on their own honeſt exertions. Let them tear themſelves from the faſcinating objects which have hitherto detained them from making acquaintance with their own hearts. It is but to ſubmit heroically to a little dullneſs at firſt, which habit will convert into pleaſure, to encounter temptation with a reſiſtance which will ſoon be rewarded with victory. They will be ſenſible of one ſurpriſing revolution; from the period when they begin to inure themſelves to their own company, they will inſenſibly diſlike it leſs, not ſo much for the goodneſs they will find in themſelves, as from diſcovering what a fund of intereſting employment,

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ment, of which they had been ſo long in ſearch, their own hearts can furniſh.

As the ſcrutiny becomes deeper, the improvement will become greater, till they will grow not ſo much to endure retirement as to rejoice in it; not ſo much to ſubſiſt without diſſipation as to ſoar above it. If they are not ſo much diverted, they will be leſs diſcompoſed. If there are fewer vanities to amuſe, there will be fewer diſorders to repair; there will be no longer that ſtruggle between indulgence and regret, between enjoyment and repentance, between idleneſs and conſcience, which diſtracts many amiable, but unfixed minds, who feel the right which they have not courage to purſue. There will be fewer of thoſe inequalities which coſt more pain in filling up than they afforded pleaſure in creating. In their habits there will be regularity, without monotony. There will be a uniform beauty in the even tiſſue of life; the web, though not ſo much ſpangled, will be more of a piece: if it be leſs glittering in patches,

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the design will be more elegant; if the colours are less glaring, they will wear better; their soberness will secure their permanence; if they are not gaudy when new, they will be fresh to the end.

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CHAP. XV.

Dangers and Advantages of Retirement.

IF ſome prefer retirement as an emancipation from troubleſome duties rather than as a ſcene of improvement, others chuſe it as a deliverance from reſtraint, and as the ſureſt mode of indulging their inclinations by a life of freedom; not a freedom from the dangers of the world, but of following their own will. While we continue in the active world, while our idleneſs is animated with buſtle, decorated with ſplendor, and diverſified with variety, we cheer our erroneous courſe with the promiſe of ſome day eſcaping from it; but when we ſit down in our retreat, unprovided with the well-choſen materials of which true enjoyment is alone compounded, or without propoſing to dedicate our retirement to the obtaining them, we are almoſt in a more hopeleſs condition

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than when we lived without reflection in the world. We were then looking forward to the privacy we now enjoy, as to a ſcene of mental profit. We had in proſpect a point which, if ever attained, would be to us the beginning of a new life, a poſt from which we ſhould ſtart in a nobler race. But the point is attained, and the end is neglected. We are ſet down in our ultimate poſition.

But retirement, from which we promiſed ourſelves ſo much, has produced no change, except from the idleneſs of tumult to that of ennui in one ſex, and from levity to apathy in the other. The active life which we had promiſed to turn into contemplative life is no improvement, if a gay frivolity is only transformed into a dull vacuity. In the world we were not truly active if we did little good; in retirement we are not contemplative, if contemplation is not exerciſed to the beſt purpoſes. It is in vain that we retire from great affairs, if our hearts are ſtuffed with ſuch as are inſignificant. There is leſs hope of a change in the mind, becauſe there

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there is no probability of a change in the circumſtances with which this projected moral alteration uſed to be connected. Where the outſet was froth, and the end is feculence, there may be a difference, but there is no improvement. We ſhall find in retirement, under new modifications, the ſame paſſions, tempers, and weakneſſes, which we had propoſed to leave behind us, without the ſame pretence of wanting time to watch againſt them. If we ſettle down in petty ſyſtematic trifling, it is not the ſize of the concern, but the ſpirit in which it is purſued, that makes the difference. The ſcandal of a village, the intrigues of a little provincial town, may be entered into with as much warmth, and as little profit, as the more impoſing follies of the metropolis.

Retirement, therefore, though ſo favourable to virtue, is not without its dangers. Taſte, and, of courſe, converſation, is liable to degenerate. Intellect is not kept in exerciſe. We are too apt to give to inſignificant topics an undue importance; to become

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arbitrary; to impoſe our opinions as laws; to contract, with a narrowneſs of thinking, an impatience of oppoſition. Yet while we grow peremptory in our deciſions, we are, at the ſame time, liable to individual influence; whereas in the world, the injurious influence of one counſellor is ſoon counteracted by that of another; and if, from the colliſion of oppoſite ſentiments we do not ſtrike out truth, we experience, at leaſt, the benefit of contradiction. If thoſe with whom we aſſociate are of an inferior education and caſt of manners, we ſhall inſenſibly lower our ſtandard, thinking it ſufficiently high, if it be above theirs, till we imperceptibly ſink to their level. The author ſaw, very early in life, an illuſtration of theſe remarks, in a perſon who had figured in the ranks of literature. He was a ſcholar and a poet. Diſappointed in his ambitious views of riſing in the church, a profeſſion for which he was little calculated, he took refuge in a country-parſonage. Here he affected to make his fate his choice. On Sundays

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Sundays he shot over the heads of the inferior part of his audience, without touching the hearts of the better informed; and, during the week, paid himself for the world's neglect by railing at it. He grew to dislike polished society, for which he had been well qualified. He spent his mornings in writing elegies on the contempt of the world, or odes on the delights of retirement, and his evenings in the lowest sensuality with the most vulgar and illiterate of his neighbours.

Another danger is that of aspiring to become the sun of our little system, since the love of popularity is not exclusively attached to public situations. In the world, indeed, if there be not a real, there must at least be a spurious merit to procure it, whereas, when there are no competitors, it is easy to be popular; to be admired by the uncultivated, and flattered by the dependent, may be the attainment of the most moderately gifted. Let us not, therefore, judge of ourselves by acclamations, which would equally follow

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the worthleſs, if they filled the ſame ſituation. If we do not remember to diſtinguiſh between our merit and our place, we ſhall receive the homage, not as a debt of gratitude or a bait for bounty, but as a tribute to excellence. From being accuſtomed to flattery, we ſhall exact it as a right; from not being oppoſed, we ſhall learn not to endure oppoſition.

Beſides the danger of contracting ſupercilious habits if ſurrounded with inferiors, there is alſo that of indulging a cenſorious ſpirit on comparing our own habits with thoſe of perſons who live in the world, and of over-rating our own exemption from practices to which, from indolence, we have no inducement, and, from circumſtances, no opportunity. When we compare our hearts and lives with thoſe of whom we know little, let us not forget to compare alſo, with others, our ſituations and temptations. The comparative eſtimates we make in our own favour are frequently fallacious, always dangerous. Many who live in the world have

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have a mortified ſpirit, while others may bring to a cloiſter hearts overflowing with the love of that world from which it is eaſier to turn our faces than to withdraw our affections.

Secluded perſons are ſometimes leſs careful to turn to profit ſmall parcels of time, which, when put together, make no inconſiderable fund. Reckoning that they have an indefinite ſtock upon hand, they neglect to devote each portion to its definite purpoſe. The largeneſs of their treaſure makes them negligent of ſmall, but inceſſant, expences. For inſtance; inſtead of light reading being uſed as a relief from ſeverer ſtudies, and better employments, it is too frequently reſorted to as the principal expedient for getting over the tediouſneſs of ſolitude; people ſlide into the indulgence to ſuch an exceſs, that it becomes no longer the relaxation, but the buſineſs. The better ſtudies, which were only to be relieved, are ſuperſeded; they become dull and irkſome; what was once pleaſure is converted into a dry duty, and

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the duty is become a task. From this plenitude of leisure there is also a danger of falling into general remissness. Business which may be done at any time, is, for that very reason, not done at all. The belief that we shall have opportunities enough to repair an omission, causes omissions to be multiplied.

From the *dangers* of retirement, we come now to the more pleasant topic of its *advantages*. The retired man cannot even pretend that his character must of necessity be melted down in the general mass, or cast into the general mould. He, at least, may think for himself, may form his own plans, keep his own hours, and, with little intermission, pursue his own projects. He is less enslaved to the despotism of custom, less driven about by the absurd fluctuations of fashion. His engagements and their execution depend more immediately on himself; his understanding is left unfettered, and he has less pretence for screening himself under the necessity of falling in with the popular ha-

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hits when they militate againſt convenience and common ſenſe.

Many of the duties of retirement are more fixed and certain, more regular in their recurrence, and obvious as to their neceſſity. As they are leſs interrupted, the neglect of them is leſs excuſable. In the world, events and engagements ſucceed each other with ſuch rapidity and preſſure, that the imagination has hardly time or incitement to exerciſe itſelf. Where all is interruption or occupation, fancy has little leiſure to operate. But if, in retirement, where this faculty finds full leiſure both for exerciſe and for chaſtiſement; if the undiſciplined mind is left entirely at its mercy, the guilt will be enhanced, and the benefit loſt; it will be ever foraging for prey, and, like other marauders, inſtead of ſtopping to ſelect, will pick up all the plunder that falls in its way, and bring in a multitude of vain thoughts to feed upon, as an indemnification for the realities of which it is deprived. The well-regulated mind, in the ſtated ſeaſons devoted to

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to the cloſet, ſhould therefore ſeverely diſcipline this vagrant faculty: They who do not make a good uſe of *theſe* ſeaſons of retirement, will not be likely to make a good uſe of the reſt. The hour of prayer or meditation is a conſecration of the hours employed in the buſineſs, whether of ſociety or ſolitude. In thoſe hours we may lay in a ſtock of grace, which, if faithfully improved, will ſhed its odour on every portion of the day.

If general ſociety contribute more to ſmooth the aſperities of manner, to poliſh roughneſſes, and file off ſharpneſſes, retirement furniſhes better means for cultivating that piety which is the only genuine ſoftener of the temper. Without this corrective, even the manners may grow auſtere, and the language harſh. But while the benevolent affections are kept in exerciſe, and the kindly offices of humanity in operation, there will be little danger that the mind will become rough and angular from the want of perpetual colliſion with poliſhed bodies.

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The exercise of beneficence, too, in the country is accompanied with more satisfaction, as the good done is less equivocal. In great cities, and especially in the metropolis, some charitable persons chiefly content themselves with promoting public subscriptions, and superintending public charities, for want of knowing the actual degree of individual distress or the truth of private representation. Here all the advantage lies on the side of the country-resident. The characters, as well as wants, of the poor are specifically known, and certainly the immediate vicinity of the opulent has the more natural, though not the sole claim, to their bounty.

Retirement is calculated to cure the great infirmity, I had almost said the mortal disease, of not being able to be alone; it is adapted to relieve the wretched necessity of perpetually hanging on others for amusement; it delivers us from the habit of depending, not only for our solace, but almost for our existence on foreign aid, and extri-

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cates us from the bondage of ſubmitting to any ſort of ſociety in order to get rid of ourſelves. It is very uſeful ſometimes thus to make experiments on our own minds, to ſtrip ourſelves of helps and ſupports, to cut off whatever is extrinſic, and, as it were, to be reduced to ourſelves. We ſhould thus learn to do without perſons and things, even while we have them, that we may not feel the privation too ſtrongly when they are not to be had. Theſe ſelf-denials conſtitute the true legitimate ſelf-love, as the multiplying of indulgences is the ſureſt way to mortification.

Thoſe to whom change is remedy, and novelty gratification, though the change be for the worſe, and the novelty be a loſs, are the firſt to bewail the diſappointment which every one elſe foreſaw. We hear thoſe complain moſt that they can get no quiet, whoſe want of it ariſes from the irruptions of their own paſſions. Peace is no local circumſtance. It does not depend on the ſituation of the houſe, but of the heart.

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True quiet is only to be found in the extirpation of evil tempers, in the victory over unruly appetites; it is found, not merely in the abſence of temptation, but in the dominion of religion. It ariſes from the cultivation of that principle, which alone can effectually ſmooth down the ſwellings of pride, ſtill the reſtleſſneſs of envy, and calm the turbulence of impure deſires. It depends on the ſubmiſſion of the will, on that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding, on the grace of Chriſt, on the conſolations of the ſpirit. With theſe bleſſings, which are promiſed to all who ſeek them, we may find tranquillity in Cheapſide; without them, we may live a life of tumult on the Eddyſtone.

Thoſe who are more converſant with poetic than pious compoſition; who have fed their fancy with the ſoothing dreams of paſtoral bards; who figure to themſelves a ſtate of pure felicity among the guileleſs beings with whom a fond imagination peoples the ſcenes of rural life, expect, when

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when they retire into the country, to meet with a new race of mortals pure as the fabled inhabitants of the golden age—ſpotleſs beings, who were not included in the primeval curſe—creatures who have not only eſcaped the contamination of the world, but the original infection of ſin, that ſin, which they allow may be caught by contact, but which they do not know is a home-born, home-bred diſeaſe. It is indeed a moſt engaging viſion, to aſſociate indiviſibly with the lovely ſcenes of nature, the lovelier form of purity: but, alas! "ſuch ſcenes were never!" The groves and lawns of the country no more make men neceſſarily virtuous, than the brick and mortar of the church make them neceſſarily pious. The enthuſiaſt of nature, while he enjoys even to rapture her unpolluted charms, muſt not, however, expect to find in retirement that unſullied innocence which the diſappointed Cowley looked for in his retreat at Chertſey; which, after his woeful failure there, he continued to perſuade himſelf

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ſelf he ſhould find in America; which his own Claudian vainly believed might be obtained by his intereſting *Old Man of Verona*, on eſcaping from that city; which even the patriarch Lot found not in eſcaping from a worſe city than Verona.

Perhaps the vivid imagination of Cowley, in his eager longings for America, like that of ſome more recent enthuſiaſts, might have been kindled by the alluring appellation of the *New* World. This ſeducing epithet might convey to his impreſſible mind the idea of ſomething young and original, and uncontaminate; ſomething that might excite the notion, not of a new found, but new created world, freſh and fair and faultleſs. But even the diſjunction of continents, which was then believed, produces no ſuch diſtinction in the human character. The native evil purſues the man

Far as th' equator thrice to the utmoſt pole.

All experience, all hiſtory, eſpecially that hiſtory which is ſupremely the record of truth,

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truth, rouſes us from the bewitching dream, and ſubverts the fair idea. It was in a garden, a garden, too, "choſen by the Sovereign Planter," that the firſt ſin, the prolific ſeed of all ſubſequent offences, was committed. It was in a retirement more profound than any we can conceive, for it was in a world of which we know only of four inhabitants, and thoſe of rural occupations, that the firſt dreadful breach of relative duties was made; that the firſt murder, and that of the deareſt connection, was perpetrated. And though the treaſon of Gethſemane was, in the divine counſels, overruled to repair the defection of Eden, yet, to ſhow how little local circumſtances influence action, and govern principle, a garden was the ſcene where that treaſon was accompliſhed.

God would not have provided ſo ill for the welfare of his creatures, who, from the conſtitution of their nature, could not have ſubſiſted but in communities, if ſecluſion had been neceſſary to ſalvation. That it is the moſt favourable ſcene for the production

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of virtue and the promotion of piety we have fully admitted. In the world temptations meet us at every corner. In retirement, it is we who make the advances. He who had tried the extremes of public and private life, who had been a ſhepherd and a king, and who knew the dangers of both conditions, has given no excluſive inſtructions to the cottage or the throne. He gives a general exhortation to "commune with our own hearts, and be ſtill;" an injunction equally applicable to the ſceptre and the crook; and, in his own caſe, he ſays, "I have poured out my heart by myſelf;" but neither is the injunction or the example limited to the world or to retirement, for ſuch pious practices equally belong to both. Yet it muſt be confeſſed he dwells on paſtoral ſcenes and rural images, with a fondneſs of which no traces are to be found in his alluſion to courts or cities.

But whether we are in public or in retired life, our inattention to the reaſon why we were ſent into our preſent ſtate, is one grand

cauſe

cauſe of the miſeries we endure in it. In the world, as we before obſerved, we are more governed by our ſenſes; in ſolitude, by our imagination. Both have a tendency to miſlead us. The latter tells us we were not ſent into this ſtate to ſuffer, but to enjoy; and the ſenſes revolt at the ſufferings which the imagination had not taught us to expect. To think of exempting ourſelves from pain, inſtead of expecting it and preparing for it, is the common error of thoſe who overlook or miſtake the end of their being. In the hope of this exemption, we fly to one reſource after another, thinking, that the eaſe which has hitherto eluded us, is not attained only becauſe we have not ſought it in the right way; that *all* expedients have not yet been tried; that *all* reſources are not yet exhauſted. Thus we take freſh comfort from the perſuaſion, that if we have miſſed of happineſs, it is not becauſe happineſs is not the proper ſtate of mortal man, nor the prohibited condition of his being, but becauſe we have erred in our purſuit,

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purſuit, and ſhall ſtill find it in the ſcheme we are next about to adopt.

A bad judgment contributes to our infelicity almoſt as much as bad diſpoſitions. It is by theſe falſe eſtimates of life, that life is made unhappy. It is from expecting from any ſtate more than it has to beſtow, that ſo little is enjoyed in any. He who is diſcontented in retirement had perhaps previouſly amuſed his vacant hours in collecting all the poſſibilities of happineſs; but had generally caught and fixed, her moſt alluring image in that projected retirement for which his worldly indulgences were every day more diſqualifying him.

Far be it from me to aim at inſpiring diſguſt at human life, or any deſpair of the real happineſs which is attainable in it. This attainment is a ſimple proceſs: to contract our deſires, that they may be always fewer than our wants; not to expect from this life more than God meant we ſhould find in it. Neither to be governed by ſenſe or fancy, but by the unerring word and will

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of God; to think constantly that the happiness of a Christian will always be more in hope than in possession; to remember that though deep and bitter sufferings are incident to our frame and state, yet the heaviest and the worst are those which *man* inflicts on man, or his own passions on himself; that we are only truly and irremediably unhappy when we fasten our desires on objects unsuitable or unattainable — objects neither commensurate to our higher nature, nor adapted to our future hope.

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CHAP. XVI.

An Inquiry why ſome Good Sort of People are not better.

THERE is a claſs of pleaſing and amiable perſons whom it would be difficult not to love, and unjuſt not to reſpect; but of whom, though candour obliges us to entertain a favourable hope, yet we are compelled to ſay, that their general conduct is rather blameleſs than excellent; their practice rather unoffending than exemplary: that their character rather exhibits a capacity for higher attainments, than any demonſtration that ſuch attainments are actually made.

Theſe are the people who, from their ſobriety of deportment and orderly habits, we ſhould be naturally led to expect would make a great proficiency in religion. They are ſeldom hurried into irregularities; diſcretion is their cardinal virtue. They are

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frequently quoted as patterns of decorum; the finger of reproach can ſeldom be pointed at their conduct; that of ridicule, never. They are not ſeldom kind and humane, feeling and charitable; they fill many relative duties in a manner which might put to the bluſh not a few, from whoſe higher profeſſion better things might have been expected.

"You have ſketched a perfect character," methinks I hear ſome angry reader exclaim. What more does ſociety demand? What more would the moſt correct man require in his ſon or his wife, his ſiſter or his daughter?

We are indeed moſt ready to allow, that few, comparatively, go ſo far; we grant that the world would be a much leſs diſorderly and vexatious ſcene than it is, if the greater number reached theſe heights which we yet preſume to conſider as inadequate to the requiſitions of the Goſpel, as inſufficient to anſwer the claims of Chriſtianity. Would it not be a very melancholy conſideration,

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if this moſt encouraging circumſtance, of their being *not far* from the kingdom of God, ſhould ever—which Heaven avert!—prove a poſſible reaſon for their not entering into it; if their being *almoſt* Chriſtians, ſhould be the very preventing cauſe of their becoming *altogether* ſuch?

Their education has been governed rather by proprieties than principles. They have learned to diſapprove of hardly any thing in the way of pleaſure for its own ſake, but highly to reprobate the extremes to which diſorderly people carry it. They cenſure a thing not ſo much for being wrong in itſelf, as for being immoderate in the degree. They condemn all the improper practices againſt which the world ſets its face, but have not very diſtinct ideas of the right and the wrong in any thing which it tolerates. Religion, which has made a part of their early inſtruction, took its turn with the uſual accompliſhments, though ſubordinately with reſpect to the earneſtneſs with which it was inculcated, and with about the ſame pro-

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portion of the time allotted to it, as minutes bear to hours. It was taught as a needful thing, but not as the *one* thing needful. Religion, however, continues to maintain its appropriate place in their reading, and, to a certain degree, to be adopted into their practice, bearing nearly the same proportion to other objects as it did when they were initiated into its elements. They were bred in its forms, and in its forms they persist to live, if the term *live* can be properly applied to any thing which is destitute of the characters and properties of life. They live, it is true, but it is as the vegetable world lives in the winter's frost, which does not indeed kill it, but benumbs its powers, and suspends its vitality.

They make a conscience of reading the Scriptures, but sometimes interpret them too much in their own favour, instead of judging of the duties they inculcate by such properties and results as they promise to produce. In making it their study, they neglect to make it their standard.

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They deceive themſelves on many points, by taking their meaſures from rules that are not legitimate. One makes his own taſte and inclination his meaſure of practice, another the example of an accredited friend; almoſt all plead the dread of ſingularity, the vanity of oppoſing your judgment to that of the world, and the abſurdity of ſetting up a ſtandard which you know to be unattainable. If you cenſure the thoughtleſſneſs of the diſſipated, they cenſure it too; lamenting that there ſhould ever be an abuſe of things ſo innocent and lawful. If you repreſent the beauty of piety, they approve of every kind of excellence in the abſtract, but when you appeal to particular inſtances, refer them to actual exemplifications, they intimate, that, in reſpect to whatever exceeds their own meaſure, it carries in it ſomewhat of aſſumption and pretence; or elſe they inſinuate, that however proper the thing may be in the perſons alluded to, *their* ſituation admits of an exemption; that what may be juſtifiable in others differently ſitu-

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ated, would be objectionable under *their* circumſtances. Thus we involve ourſelves in the flimſy web of a deluſive ſophiſtry till the error becomes deſtructive before it is diſcerned.

Exceſs of every kind is what they carefully avoid; and exceſs in religion as much as in any other thing. Under this head they expunge zeal from their catalogue of virtues. The eſtabliſhment of a correct character is their firſt object, and the good opinion of the world the inſtrument by which they eſtabliſh it. This keeps their views low; though it coſts as much pains and precaution to keep up a high reputation on worldly grounds as it would to cultivate the principle itſelf, whoſe reſults would, in ſome reſpects, be nearly the ſame as what they are labouring to attain. *To be* the thing would be a ſhorter cut to comfort, than by inceſſant ſtudy and effort to keep up its appearance.

Propriety and order, virtues in themſelves, obtain for them the reputation of ſtill higher virtues;

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virtues; all that appears is so amiable, that the world readily gives them credit for qualities which are supposed to lie behind, and are only prevented by diffidence from appearing. They carry on with each other an intercourse of reciprocal, but measured flattery; this serves to promote kindness to each other, and esteem for themselves. Self-complacency is rather kept out of sight by the delicacy of good-breeding, than subdued by religious conviction. They are rather governed by certain of the more sober worldly maxims, than by the strictness of Christian discipline. Though they fear sin, and avoid it, yet it is to be suspected they most carefully avoid those faults which are most disreputable, and that its impropriety has its full share with its turpitude in their abhorrence.

As to religion, they rather respect, than love it. They seem to intimate, that there is something of irreverence in any familiarity with the subject, and place it at an awful distance, as a thing whose mysterious gran-

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deur would be diminiſhed by a too near approach. Another reaſon why they conſider religion rather as an object of veneration than affection, is, becauſe they erroneouſly conceive it to be an enemy to innocent pleaſure.

If they are not perfectly good Chriſtians, it is not becauſe they are good Jews, for they do not "talk of the words" which were commanded under that diſpenſation, *when they ſit in their houſe, and when they walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they riſe up.* Religion engages their regard ſomewhat in the way in which the laws of the land engage it, as ſomething ſacred, from being eſtabliſhed by cuſtom and precedent; as a valuable inſtitution for the preſervation of the public good; but it does not intereſt their feelings; they do not conſider it ſo much a thing of individual concern, as of general protection. Of its eſtabliſhment by authority they think more highly, than of its buſineſs with their own hearts; of its influence in maintaining general

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general order, than of its efficacy in promoting in themſelves peace and joy. In ſhort, they carve out an image of religion not altogether unorthodox, but which, like the uninformed ſtatue of the enamoured artiſt, though a beautiful figure, is without life, or power, or motion.

The more obvious duties being diſcharged, they are a little inclined to think, that too conſiderable a portion of their time and talents are left at their own diſpoſal. Large intervals of leiſure are rather aſſumed to be a neceſſary repoſe and refreſhment from right employments and benevolent actions, and as purchaſed by their performance, than as having any ſpecific application of their own. In ſhort, things which they call indifferent, make up too large a portion of their ſcheme of life, and in their diſtribution of time.

The claſs we are conſidering are apt to be very ſevere in their cenſures of thoſe who have loſt their reputation, while they are rather too charitable to thoſe who only de-

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ſerve to loſe it. This exceſſive valuation of externals is not likely to be accompanied with great candour in judging the diſcredited and the unfortunate. Errors which we ourſelves have had no temptation to commit, we are too much diſpoſed to think out of the reach of pardon; and, while we juſtly commend innocence, we give too little credit to repentance.

The misfortune is, they do not ſo much as ſuſpect that there is any higher ſtate of being, any degree of ſpiritual life, beyond what they have attained. They conſider religion rather as a ſcheme of rules, than a motive principle, as a ſtationary point, than a perpetual progreſs. They conſider its obſervances rather as an end, than a means. It is not ſo much natural preſumption which roots them where they are, for, in ordinary caſes, they are perhaps diffident and modeſt; it is not always conceit which prevents their minds from ſhooting upwards: it is the low notion they entertain of the genius of Chriſtianity; it is the inadequateneſs of their

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views with its requirements; it is their unacquaintedness with the spirit of that religion which they profess honestly, but understand indistinctly. This ignorance makes them rest satisfied with a state which did not satisfy the great Apostle. While *they* think they have made a progress sufficient to justify them in believing they have "already attained," *his* vast attainments served only to prevent his looking back on them, served only to stimulate him to press forward towards the mark. Some good sort of people, on the contrary, act as if they were afraid of being different from what they are, or of being surprised into becoming better than they intended.

Among the many causes which concur to keep them at a sort of determined distance from serious piety, a not uncommon one is, their happening to hear of the injudicious exhibition of religion in one or more of its high but eccentric professors: these they affect to believe, are fair specimens of the so much vaunted religious world. Instead of

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inquiring what is the true ſcriptural view of Chriſtianity, that they may make nearer approaches to it, they are far more anxiouſly concerned to recede, as far as poſſible, from perſons who falſely profeſs to be its beſt repreſentatives. They conclude, and, in ſome inſtances, but too juſtly, that the profeſſion of theſe people has not tranſformed their hearts, but their connections; that they have adopted a party rather than a principle, embraced a cloud for a goddeſs, and an opinion, inſtead of a rule of conduct; and they obſerve that they are unjuſt in their enmities to other claſſes, in proportion to the violence of their attachment to their own. It is no wonder if, with their partial view of the ſubject, they ſhould be diſcerned, when they ſee theſe perſons act as much below their ſyſtem, as they themſelves not ſeldom live above their own.

But they do not act thus on other occaſions. If they meet with an incompetent but bluſtering lawyer, or an unſkilful but preſumptuous phyſician, inſtead of calumniating

having the two learned faculties, inſtead of reſolving to have no more to do with either, they avoid the offending individuals, and look out for ſounder practitioners. Hence, indeed, it is to be remarked by the way, there ariſes a new and powerful motive, why all who make a high profeſſion of religion ſhould not only be eminently careful to exhibit an even and conſiſtent practice, but ſhould ſtudiouſly avoid in their converſation all offenſive phraſes, and repulſive expreſſions; why they ſhould not be perpetually intimating, as if *preaching the Goſpel* was a party-buſineſs, and a buſineſs entirely confined to their own party.

Worldly obſervers, of the better ſort, cannot ſometimes but perceive in the ſame claſs of religioniſts, leſs forbearance in their temper, leſs patience, leſs moderation and kindneſs, than they themſelves evince; they alſo remark in ſome of them, though it is doubtleſs done with a view not to ſubſtract from their charities, leſs generoſity and largeneſs of heart than they ſee in many of

their own clafs; a petty ſtrictneſs in their dealings, not quite of a piece with the liberality, I had almoſt ſaid, with the honeſty, of Chriſtianity. Unhappily, they are kept on their guard in the unneceſſary dread of being righteous over-much, by the very peculiarities which, in theſe perſons, indicate a defect rather than a redundancy. Theſe indications, however, which they conceive to be the diſtinctive marks of the whole tribe, make them ſtand aloof from Chriſtians of the ſounder claſs, in whom they might have ſeen, on a nearer approach, a fair and lovely exhibition of the principle by which they are governed.

Another preventing cauſe of improvement is, their aſſociating familiarly with perſons of leſs worth than themſelves. This is injurious in two ways:—Theſe ſober followers of pleaſure ſanction its thoughtleſs devotee by the influence of their reſpectable character, and give weight to thoſe who would otherwiſe have none, while, at the ſame time, they cannot but feel their own

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decided ſuperiority to thoſe with whom their complaiſance unites them; and when they compare themſelves with characters ſo defective, they are in danger of reſting ſtill more ſatisfied with their own moderate, though higher, ſtandard. But, to be conſcious of being better than thoſe who are bad, is no very ſolid ground either of comfort or credit.

There is another co-operating cauſe which keeps down their growth of piety. They are converſant with various claſſes of writers on different ſubjects, who do not indeed go farther in their diſregard of religion than to let it alone; if they avowedly attacked it, the perſons in queſtion would take the alarm, and avoid the peruſal of works obviouſly pregnant with evil. Theſe writers do not always oppoſe it, but they have nothing to do with it; they virtually ſay, we have not ſo much as heard whether there be any Chriſtianity. We are far from meaning that religion ought to be, or that it can, with propriety, be obtruded into ſubjects

jects of a totally diſtinct nature. Yet, if its ſubtle and pervading principle were mixed up with the other ingredients in the mind of the author, the penetrating ſpirit would occaſionally break through, not in matter, but in eſſence. Where this feeling exiſts in the heart, a ray of light will ſometimes fall unconſciouſly on ſubjects which have no immediate connexion with it. In a cloudy day, though you do not ſee the body of the ſun, you know, from the light it emits that it is in its proper ſtation.

But the writers to whom we allude, take other ground; they ſet out with other views; their ethics have another caſt. There is a pretty ſtrong implication, eſpecially in compoſitions of ſome of our modiſh itinerants, how good men may be independent of religion. In writers of a ſounder caſt, indeed, though alſo with theſe, amuſement be the profeſſed object, with whatever flowers they ſtrew the path, they entice you into no moraſſes; you always feel there is a bottom. You go on as much entertained as if you

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you were miſled. The pleaſure of an uncorrupted mind is not diminiſhed by feeling himſelf ſafe, nor is it interrupted while he is gratifying his fancy, by being obliged to watch that no trap is laid for his principles.

To explain, by one or two inſtances:—Clarendon's and Burnet's Hiſtories of their own Times no more profeſs to be religious works, than the Hiſtories of Hume or Smollet. They are written by men of different political parties, of different profeſſional engagements. Yet, though treating on ſubjects which naturally excluded any formal deſcants on religion, there is a predominating tendency which diſcloſes the principles of both; which affords a pledge of their general principles; which makes the reader feel himſelf ſafe, becauſe it aſſures him he is in the hands of a Chriſtian hiſtorian.

Again:—In travelling to the Hebrides with Johnſon, it is no ſmall thing to find, that we can be delighted without being in danger. The Touriſt, without ſtepping out of his way to hunt for moral remark or religious

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ligious ſuggeſtion, never forgets that he is a Chriſtian moraliſt; though in queſt of mere amuſement, we find our minds enriched with ſome juſt ſentiment, fortified with ſome ſound principle.

But, in the modiſh ſchool, the traveller preſents his benevolent man, the novelliſt his perfect character, the moraliſt his philoſopher, the poet his hero, with principles, if not always elaborately in oppoſition to, yet thoroughly unconnected with, the Chriſtian ſcheme. It is rather a ſilent counterworking of its neceſſity than an overt attack on its truth; for this ſtrong meaſure is now leſs reſorted to, as more repulſive and leſs ſucceſsful. Neglect anſwers the end better than oppoſition. The longer any thing is kept out of ſight, the leſs irkſome its abſence becomes, till, from feeling it not neceſſary, we proceed to think it not real. The traces of right principle grow faint in the mind, when perpetually hid by interpoſing objects. The misfortune is, theſe works make up the larger part of the ſtudy of many

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many readers, who do not ſo much deſire to get rid of a ſtricter ſcheme, as to loſe the perception that they have it not, and the remembrance that, perhaps, they once had it.

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CHAP. XVII.

The Inquiry, why ſome Good Sort of People are not better, continued.

THERE is one prominent cauſe which aſſiſts in preventing the perſons conſidered in the preceding chapter from making any material proficiency; and it is the very cauſe, which, if it had been rightly directed, would probably, in ſuch minds, have led to a contrary end — their choice of *religious* reading; it is, confining their pious ſtudies excluſively and ſyſtematically to that low ſtandard of divinity, which has cramped the growth of many well-diſpoſed perſons. The beginning of the laſt century firſt preſented us with this lax theology; which, though it has ſtill its advocates and followers, they are, we truſt, daily declining in numbers and in credit. The exceſs to which this deteriorated Chriſtianity has been carried in a recent academical

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academical exihibition of "*Chriſtian Liberty*," and eſpecially in a late ſeries of theological "*Hints*," by a profeſſor of the law, has, it is to be hoped, produced a good effect. When an evil has touched its ultimate point, May we not preſume, that the practice may make a gradual retroceſſion to ſound principle? In theſe, and ſimilar writers, no one but ſees that the road to heaven is made far more ſmooth and eaſy than the Scriptures have made it; ſo ſmooth, as to invite many, and advance none; ſo eaſy, that not only, as in the old code, thoſe who run may read, but thoſe who ſleep may conquer.

But what ſtill renders this meagre divinity unfortunately too acceptable, is, that it teaches a complacency in our own goodneſs; that goodneſs, the acquiſition of which is rendered eaſy, becauſe it falls in ſo readily with our natural corruptions. The truth is, we require leſs to be excited to the practice of ſome inſulated virtues, which theſe authors do not neglect to recommend, than to the abaſing of that pride which they rather foſter

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foſter than correct. When we hear ſo much of the dignity of human nature, we ſecretly exult in our participation of that dignity; we take to ourſelves a full ſhare of that ſtock of excellence laviſhly attributed to our ſpecies, and are ready to exclaim, *and I, too, am a man!* Theſe writers make their way to the affections by a plauſibility of manner which veils the ſhallowneſs of their reaſoning. But the great engine of ſucceſs, as we have already obſerved, is the prudent accommodation of the reaſoning to the natural propenſities of the heart, and the flattering the very evils, the exiſtence of which they yet deny. The reader welcomes the doctrines which put him in good humour with himſelf; he cordially credits the propheſier of ſmooth things, and is pleaſed, in proportion as he is not alarmed. That which does not go to the root of the evil — evil which cannot be cured without being diſturbed — that which does not irritate the patient, by laying open the peccant part, will be naturally acceptable.

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Theſe writers are too much diſpoſed to addreſs their readers as if they were already religious; as requiring, indeed, to be reminded, but not as requiring to be alarmed; as expecting commendation for what they are, rather than admonition as to what they ought to be. They take for granted, what in ſome caſes requires proof, that all are Chriſtians, not in profeſſion, but in reality: and the ſame uniform claſs of inſtructions, or rather of gratuitous poſitions, is directed to the whole maſs, without any individual ſearchings of the heart, without any diſtinct addreſs, any diſcriminating application to that variety of claſſes of which ſociety is compounded. To the profligate liver, or the more decent ſenſualiſt; to the ſceptical moraliſt, or the careleſs believer; to all perhaps, if we might except that moſt hated heretic, the fanatical over-believer, is the one ſoothing panegyric, or the one frigid admonition, addreſſed. We do not pretend to ſay that virtue is not recommended, but as Seneca and Antoninus had recommended

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mended it before, ſo they had done it better, leſs vaguely, and more pointedly. Many of the virtues, by the practice of which the readers are taught that ſalvation is to be obtained, they cannot but feel to be their own virtues; this, while it ſets their apprehenſions at reſt, naturally fills them with complacency in their actual character, inſtead of kindling an ardent deſire after higher attainments. Vices, from which they muſt be conſcious they are exempt, and which they have as little excitement as occaſion to practiſe, are properly cenſured: but the evil diſpoſitions of the heart, which if inſiſted on and pointedly laid open, would ſet them upon examining their own, are paſſed over, or lightly treated, or ſoftened down into natural weakneſs, pardonable imperfection, or accidental infirmity. The heart is not conſidered as the perennial fountain of all actual offence and error.

A theology which depreſſes the ſtandard, which overlooks the motives, which dilutes the doctrines, ſoftens the precepts, lowers the

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the ſanctions, and mutilates the ſcheme of Chriſtianity; which merges it in undefined generalities, which makes it conſiſt in a ſyſtem of morals which might be interwoven into almoſt any religion — for there are few ſyſtems of religion which profeſs or teach immorality; a theology which neither makes Jeſus Chriſt the foundation, nor the Holy Spirit the efficient agent, nor inward renovation a leading principle, nor humility a diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic; which inſiſts on a good heart, but demands not a renewed heart; which inſerts virtues into the ſtock of the old nature, but inſiſts not on the neceſſity of a changed nature;—ſuch a theology is not that which the coſtly apparatus of Chriſtianity was deſigned to preſent to us. If it teaches that we have virtues to attain and imperfections to be cured, it inſinuates that the one may be attained by our own ſtrength, and the other cured without divine aſſiſtance. Our faults, if we have any, are to be ſurmounted by our reaſon, and our virtues to be improved from

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a regard to our comfort and the advancement of our credit; for the ſatisfaction they afford, and the reputation they procure us. The good man of theſe writers, like the good man of the ancient Stoics, is ſo full of virtue as to leave no room for repentance, ſo faultleſs that humility would be affectation. Like them they ſeem almoſt to diminiſh the diſtance between their Maker and themſelves, by exalting the man and lowering the Deity.

The perſons in queſtion frequently read the Scriptures, and we are ready to wonder that in reading them they do not perceive their diſagreement with the authors to whom we allude. There, all the doctrines overlooked by them, are preſſed in every page; but whether they read without remarking the difference, or whether, though in the uſe (as we hope) of daily prayer, they neglect to implore that divine ſpirit which inſpired the Scriptures, to direct the truths they contain to their hearts; they do not ſeem to enter into the grand peculiarities of the Goſpel;

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Goſpel; nor into the perſonal intereſt they have in the doctrines it inculcates, and the precepts it enforces. How many read the account of the fall of Adam, as an hiſtorical fact, of which they never entertained a doubt, yet without feeling any more individual concern in it, than in the fall of Babylon; without being ſenſible of any correſponding contamination in their own hearts. When told of the ſelf-denying doctrines which Chriſtianity includes, they triumphantly produce paſſages, not only from Solomon and St. Paul, but from the Saviour himſelf, which completely contradict ſuch gloomy aſſertions, *that the ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace;* that *Chriſt's commands are not grievous;* that *his yoke is eaſy*, with a multitude of the ſame animating ſtrain. But they produce them, not ſo much becauſe they are indeed moſt delightful truths, as becauſe they are ſuppoſed to annul ſuch leſs engaging texts as are deſcriptive of *the ſtrait gate*, and *the narrow way*, and *the few*

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who enter them; of the difficulty with which the rich, that is, thoſe who truſt in riches, ſhall attain to heaven; that *taking up the croſs* is an indiſpenſable qualification for the followers of him who ſuffered on it, with a endleſs multitude of ſimilar paſſages.

Now the truth is, there is not the ſlighteſt diſagreement between theſe two claſſes of texts. The unqualified peace, joy, and comfort, expreſſed in the former, repreſent what religion is in herſelf, deſcribe her native excellence, her genuine beauty, her original perfection. Whereas the difficulties attached to the ſecond claſs ariſe neceſſarily from that depravity of the will, that alienation from God and goodneſs, which renders that irkſome which is in itſelf delightful. To him who knows, becauſe he feels, the natural reluctance of the heart to the requiſitions of a religion calculated to produce theſe happy effects, there is a perfect congruity between the paſſages thus ſet in oppoſition. Though both are true, each is conſiſtent with the other; but their truth

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and conſiſtency ſtrike not thoſe who reject or adopt what beſt ſuits their creed or their convenience.

They know, indeed, that they muſt give a nominal aſſent to the doctrine of divine aſſiſtance, becauſe it is ſaid to be a doctrine of that Scripture which they believe; but they aſſent to it with implicitneſs, rather than conviction, and if they do allow the intervention of the Holy Spirit, they attach an undue value to human agency. If they ſay, they are far from excluding heavenly aid, their aſſent ſomewhat reſembles that of the Welch captain, who, when Henry the Fifth, after the battle of Agincourt, aſcribed excluſively the victory to God, coolly replied, "indeed he did us great good."

But many of the writers to whom we have adverted, and by whom the perſons in queſtion are influenced, ſeem to make their reverence for the Scriptures a ground for diſallowing the agency of the ſpirit; as if there were not the moſt perfect agreement between an appeal to the one and a belief in

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the other. The ſpirit of God leads us to no new inſtructor, but only points us to his word, teaching us to diſcern it more clearly and to receive it more affectionately. That would be, indeed, an illuſion, not an illumination, which would direct us to derive our inſtruction from any other fountain than the oracles of truth.

Theſe perſons are ſtriking inſtances how dexterouſly we contrive to turn the ſcale in our own favour, by balancing ſome leſſer fault to which we are not inclined, againſt ſome ſtrongly beſetting wrong propenſity. We ſeldom ſoften down any precept that is not pointed at our particular temptation. All the other laws we allow to be not only good and holy, but juſt, for they only affect other people. The young man in the Goſpel had no objection to thoſe commandments which were ſuggeſted to him as the rule of duty; for he was chaſte and honeſt, neither a diſobedient ſon, nor a murderer, neither addicted to idolatry nor profaneneſs; but the command to diſpoſſeſs himſelf of his fortune

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fortune for charitable purpoſes cut deep, for he was not only rich, but avaricious. It is thus we prevaricate with duty. We would warp the precept to our paſſions, inſtead of bending our inclinations to the duty. We lament the harſhneſs of the command, when we ſhould be lamenting the perverſity of the will.

A low ſtandard of religion flatters our vanity, is eaſily acted up to, does not wound our ſelf-love, is practicable without ſacrifices, and reſpectable without ſelf-denial. It allows the implantation of virtues without eradicating vices, recommends right actions without expelling wrong principles, and grafts fair appearances upon unreſiſted corruptions.

This low tone of religion is rendered ſtill more acceptable, from being ſprinkled with frequent vituperations of that ſpecies of Chriſtianity now derided by a term which was once conſidered as its ſpecific character. This term, what with the too monopolizing adoption of it by one deſcription

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of perſons, and the contemptuous implication conveyed in the uſe of it by another, we almoſt fear to uſe, leſt we ſhould be conjuring up the ſpirit of fanaticiſm in the minds of the latter claſs, or vindicating its excluſive adoption in the language of the former. The aſſumption of names on the one hand, and, if I may venture ſo vulgar a phraſe, calling names on the other, have been of infinite diſſervice to religion. Such is the new meaning now aſſigned to old terms, that we doubt if the application of the epithet in queſtion would not excite a ſneer, if not a ſuſpicion, againſt the character of Iſaiah himſelf, were we to name him by his ancient denomination, *the Evangelical Prophet*. This laconic term includes a diatribe in a word. It is eſtabliſhed into a ſweeping term of deriſion of all ſerious Chriſtians, and its compaſs is ſtretched to ſuch an extent, as to involve within it every ſhade and ſhape of real or fictitious piety, from the elevated but ſound and ſober Chriſtian, to the wildeſt and moſt abſurd fanatic; its large incloſure takes

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takes in all, from the moſt honourable heights of erudition to the moſt contemptible depths of ignorance. Every man who is ſerious, and every man who is ſilly, every man who is holy, and every man who is mad, is included in this comprehenſive epithet. We ſee perpetually that ſolidity, ſublimity, and depth, are not found a protection againſt the magic miſchief of this portentous appellation.

It gratifies us to be aſſured that our own tone is ſufficiently high, and that, whatever is higher, is erroneous, or ſuperfluous, or hypocritical, or ridiculous. This it is which attaches many a reader to the oppoſite ſtyle of writing, and, in proportion as it attaches him, by reconciling him more to himſelf, animates him more fiercely againſt thoſe who make higher requiſitions of faith and holineſs, thoſe who ſtrip off the maſk from actions unfounded in principle, who exact ſelf-abaſement, who inſiſt on the neceſſity of good works, not as a meritorious ground of

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ſalvation, but as an evidence of obedience to God, and of conformity to Chriſt.

Moſt ſincerely do we believe, that there is nothing which the better ſort of this claſs dread more than hypocriſy. But do they not ſometimes dread the imputation almoſt as much as the thing? And is it not to be feared that, with the dread of this odious vice being imputed to them, is a little connected the ſuſpicion of its exiſtence in all who go farther than themſelves? Are they not too ready to accuſe of want of ſincerity or of ſoberneſs, every one who riſes above their own level? Is not every degree of warmth in their pious affections, every expreſſion of zeal in their converſation, every indication of ſtrictneſs in their practice, conſtrued into an implication, that ſo much as this zeal and ſtrictneſs exceed their own, there is in them juſt ſo much error as that exceſs involves?

By the claſs of writers to which they are attached, the pious affections are branded as the ſtigma of enthuſiam. But a religion which

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which is all brain, and no heart, is not the religion of the Goſpel. The ſpirit there exhibited is as far removed from philoſophical apathy, as from the intemperate language of paſſion. There are minds ſo conſtituted, and hearts ſo touched, that they cannot meditate on the incarnation of the Son of God, his voluntary deſcent from the glory which he had with his Father from all eternity, his dying for us men and for our ſalvation — with the ſame unmoved temper with which they acknowledge the truth of any other fact. A grateful feeling, excited by theſe cauſes, is as different from a fanatical fervor as it is from a languid acknowledgement. It is not energy, however, which is reprobated, ſo much as the cauſe of its excitement. Should the zealous Chriſtian change the object of his admiration, ſhould he expreſs the ſame animated feeling for Socrates, which the other had expreſſed for his Saviour, his enthuſiaſm would be aſcribed to his good taſte, and the object would be allowed to juſtify the rapture.

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But, is not objecting to earneſtneſs in religion to ſtrike out of the catalogue of virtues that quality which ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed the Scripture worthies? Is it not denying that "ſpirit of power and of love" which, it is worth obſerving, the Apoſtle makes the aſſociate of "a ſound mind," to deny that Chriſtianity ought to make an impreſſion on the heart, and if on the heart, on the feelings? Theſe faſtidious critics place, what they call the abſtract truths of religion, on the ſame footing with abſtract truths in ſcience; they allow only the ſame intellectual conviction of truth, the ſame cool aſſent, in the one caſe, which is given to a demonſtration in the other. But would not he be thought a defective orator at the bar, or in the ſenate, who ſhould plead as if he did not know that men had feelings to be touched as well as underſtandings to be convinced; who conſidered the affections as the only portion of character to which he muſt be careful not to advert, in addreſſing beings who are feeling as well as intelligent?

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intelligent? Shall a fervent rhetoric be admired in one orator, when pleading for the freedom of men, and reprobated in another, when pleading for their ſalvation? Shall we be enraptured with the eloquent advocate for the Agrarian law, and diſguſted with the ſtrenuous advocate for the everlaſting Goſpel? Shall not one man be allowed the ſame earneſtneſs in combating unbelief, which has immortalized another in execrating Verres?

It muſt, aſſuredly, be maintained, that there is ſuch a ſober mode of exhibiting truth, as may ſhew that the ſacred meſſenger has no delight in declaring that part of his meſſage which yet it is his duty to deliver; which, while it cannot fail to call forth every feeling of intereſt for the ſouls of men, at the ſame time demands the utmoſt tenderneſs, as treating of their dangers. Tenderneſs, it is true, muſt not alter truth, nor conceal menaces, which make an awful part of it. Yet a difference may be ſometimes inferred by the manner of delivering them.

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them. Who has not heard a holy man, who, feeling himſelf bound to declare the whole counſel of God, has denounced his ſolemn judgments with a ſubdued voice, and an almoſt heſitating accent; ſpeaking as one who felt that he was acquitting himſelf of a painful, but bounden duty; — while another of a coarſer make, and a leſs mortified ſpirit, proclaims the commanded threat in all the thunders of Sinai; ſeeming, by his tone and geſture, to rejoice that it has fallen to his lot to alarm, and not to conſole? The one "perſuades men" becauſe he knows "the terrors of the Lord;" the other ſeems to have his own gratification in terrifying. The one evidently rejoices in being the ambaſſador of reconciliation, the other appears, but is not, we are aſſured, really, glad to bear the mandate of condemnation.

But, to return to writers in the extreme of the other claſs. — Vague eſſays on general and undefined morality, which we here venture to repreſent as their fault, are very different from diſtinct diſcourſes or treatiſes

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on the ſeveral virtues; theſe latter flow from the ſtudy, and teach the improvement, of the human heart. But to produce their effect, they muſt produce their commiſſion. The proclamation muſt always have the broad ſeal of Chriſtianity appended to it. It is indeed not only unneceſſary, but impoſſible and imprudent, that in every diſcourſe the whole ſcheme of Chriſtian doctrine ſhould be laid open. An attempt to do this has frequently produced confuſion, by crowding in more materials than the ſpace will contain; and thus leaving the ſtamp of no one truth diſtinct upon the mind. We mean no more, than that the general impreſſion made, ſhould be, that the moral quality under diſcuſſion ſhould appear to be explicitly derived from the ſchool of Chriſt, and the reader not be left to exerciſe his ingenuity in conjecturing, till the cloſing ſentence informs him, to what ſyſtem of religion it belongs.

It is alſo perfectly proper to cut the circle of the virtues into ſegments, provided it be ſhewn

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ſhewn how they are connected with each other, and how the whole fall within the circumference of that divine religion which is their proper centre. It were alſo to be wiſhed, that there were no undue and hyperbolical exaltation of the virtue under conſideration, which often makes a part ſtand for the whole. This excluſive praiſe of the quality inculcated, is, to Chriſtianity, what it would be to general geography, if, in order to give an idea of our world, a map of a ſingle country ſhould be exhibited without coaſt or boundary. It differs from the Chriſtian exhibition of moral virtues, as this inſulated map would differ from a chart of the ſame country when delineated on the globe; there you ſee not only the country itſelf correctly diſplayed, but you perceive by what ſea it is bordered, on what land it touches, into what other country ſome points of this cut deep, and how narrow are the bounds which ſeparate it from ſome hoſtile neighbour; you ſee, alſo, its depend-

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dependance on every thing about it, and its relative ſituation on the earth.

If we might be allowed another illuſtration, we would obſerve, that, to expect to give a juſt idea of Chriſtianity by any quality, as detached from the whole, would be to reſemble a certain Athenian, who, having a palace to ſell, took out a ſingle brick from the wall, and produced it at the auction as a ſpecimen of the edifice.

Nor, as we humbly conceive, is it a ſuperfluous care, ſo to contrive, as that, when it is right to expoſe any vice to reprobation, the reader who is exempt from it may not too much plume himſelf upon the exemption. A venerable clergyman once aſſured the author, that he had never done ſo much miſchief as by the beſt ſermon he had ever preached. It was againſt the ſin of drunkenneſs. It happened to be an offence to which none of his auditors were addicted. After it was over, ſome of them expreſſed no ſmall triumph at their own ſecure ſtate, from a conſciouſneſs of being free from the vice

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vice which had been ſo well expoſed, and, as if the exercife of no virtue but the one oppoſite to the ſin in queſtion had been neceſſary, they went home exulting in their own ſuperior goodneſs.

The writers to whom we have been referring, triumphantly diſtinguiſh themſelves by the appellation of *practical*, in ſtudied oppoſition to thoſe who are profeſſedly doctrinal. Let it, however, be obſerved, that, maintaining a due reſpect for the conſcientious of both claſſes, we only preſume to allude, in our animadverſion, to thoſe of either ſide, who carry their ſpecific characteriſtics into an extreme, in which each excludes its oppoſite. But far more deficient are the practical diſcuſſions of the one, if they want the ſolid weight and metal of the Goſpel to make them ſterling, than the doctrinal diſſertations of the other; which, however, ought never to want the intelligible ſuperſcription of practical remark to render them current. Yet is there not ſometimes a miſnomen in the former appellation?

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lation? Can that writing be called truly practical which does not attempt greatly to raiſe the tone of conduct, which does not preſs practice home on the conſcience as flowing from the higheſt principle, and directed to the nobleſt end; which is not urged on that ground of argument that is the moſt cogent, nor inferred from that motive which is the moſt irreſiſtible, nor impreſſed by that authority beſt calculated to ſecure obedience? The nature of the action commonly participates in the nature of the motive. Practice is not likely to riſe higher than the ſpring which ſet it a-going.

At the ſame time, it is but fair to confeſs, that much of that ſpecies of compoſition which aſſumes a more ſpiritual character, is ſometimes lamentably deficient in this grand requiſite. It begins not ſeldom, by laying a good and ſolid foundation; but when we lift our eyes to look upon the ſtructure which we expected to ſee raiſed upon it, we find it negligently run up, if not totally omitted. Practice ſeems to be conſidered

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as a thing of courſe, not neceſſary to be inſiſted on, much leſs to have its path clearly chalked out. The uſe to be made of the doctrine which has been delivered, is turned over to the piety or ingenuity of the reader, without any ſpecific direction, or perſonal application. Too much is left for him to ſupply, which perhaps, implicitly leaning on his guide, he will not ſupply, or which, from want of knowledge, he cannot.

Far be it from our intention, however, in thus venturing with real diffidence to compare the faulty extremes in both caſes, to aſſimilate at all their nature or their tendency:—the extreme of adherence to doctrine frequently ſpringing from the deepeſt ſenſe of the infinite importance of that doctrine, and accompanied with a pious willingneſs to ſpend, and be ſpent, in its propagation. The extreme of adherence to what is called mere morality, is too often the lamentable effect of ignorance of doctrine, and of an intereſt neither felt, nor poſſeſſed, nor deſired, in doctrinal bleſſings.

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With this guard diſtinctly kept in view, we venture, with all humility, to repeat, that there is an extreme on both ſides: the one may be abſtractedly conſidered as all propoſitions, the other as all concluſions. The one fails of effect by not depending on juſt premiſes; in the other, well eſtabliſhed premiſes produce inferior good, becauſe the concluſions are not ſufficiently brought to bear on the actual demands of life. The one, while he powerfully ſhews the reader that he is a ſinner, limits both his proof and his inſtruction to one or two prominent doctrines; he names, indeed, with unwearied iteration, that only name by which we can be ſaved, faithfully dwells on the efficacy of the divine remedy, but without clearly pointing out its application to practical purpoſes. The other preſumes his readers to be ſo wiſe, as to be able to ſupply their own deficiencies, or ſo good, as to ſtand in little need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance. Is it not mocking human helpleſſneſs, to tell men they muſt be holy, good, and juſt, without directing them to the

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the principle from whence "all holy thoughts, all good counſels, and all juſt works, do proceed"—to direct the ſtream of action, and keep out of ſight the ſpring from which it muſt flow—to expect they will renounce ſin if they do not renounce ſelf—to ſend them vagrant in ſearch of ſome ſtray virtue, without ſhewing them where to apply for direction to find it?

The combination of the oppoſite but indiſpenſable requiſites is moſt happily exemplified in all our beſt divines, living and dead; and, bleſſed be God, very numerous is the catalogue in both inſtances. They have, with a large and liberal conſtruction, followed that moſt perfect exemplification of this union which is ſo generally exhibited in Scripture, more particularly in that expreſs model, the third chapter of the Epiſtle to the Coloſſians. There, every thing that is excellent in practice is made to proceed from Him "in whom are hidden all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge." There, every act has its inſpiring motive,

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motive, every virtue its radical principle; falſehood is not only prohibited to the converts, but the prohibition is accounted for, "*becauſe* ye have put on the new man." The obedience of wives, the affection of huſbands, the ſubmiſſion of children, all is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jeſus."— Servants are enjoined to fidelity as "fearing God." "Mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering;" are recommended, *becauſe* the converts "are the elect of God." Every inhibition of every wrong practice has its reference to Chriſt, every act of goodneſs its evangelical principle. Contentions are forbidden, forgiveneſs is enjoined, on the ſame high ground — the example of "Him in whom dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily." This is *practical preaching* — This is *evangelical preaching*.

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CHAP. XVIII.

Thoughts reſpectfully ſuggeſted to Good Sort of People.

IN peruſing the foregoing chapter, it may be, as it has been, with unwearied iteration, objected, that it is equally prepoſterous and unjuſt, to hold out a ſtandard of religion and morals ſo high, as to defeat, in the reader, all hope of attaining to it. It may be urged, that it would be more prudent, as well as more uſeful, to propoſe a more moderate ſtandard, and to ſuggeſt a more temperate meaſure, which would not, as in the preſent caſe, by diſcouraging, render attainment hopeleſs. For an anſwer, we muſt ſend them to the Redeemer's own mouth, to the exciſion of the right hand, the plucking out the right eye. This, it will be juſtly inſiſted, is not a command, but a metaphor. Granted.—We know we

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are not commanded to lop off our limbs, but our corruptions. But, would He who is not only true, but THE TRUTH, adopt a ſtrong metaphor to expreſs a feeble obligation? Is any tone, then, may we not aſk, too high, if not higher than that uniformly employed in the Bible? What do we mean, when we ſay, that we receive the Goſpel as a rule of faith and practice, if, having made the declaration, we inſtantly go, and, without ſcruple, lower the rule and depreſs the practice?

High and low are indefinite terms: their juſt uſe depends on the greatneſs or littleneſs of the objects to which they refer. When we conſider, that the object in queſtion is eternal life, ſhould the ſtandard which God has made the meaſure of our attaining to it, be ſo depreſſed as to prevent that attainment? Do not the Apoſtles and their Maſter, the Saints and the King of Saints, every where ſuggeſt a rule, not only of excellence, but perfection; a rule to which no hope-

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leſſneſs of attainment is to prevent our ſtretching forward?

Scripture does, indeed, every where repreſent us as incompetent without divine aſſiſtance. But does it not every where point out where our ſtrength lies; where it is to be ſought; how it is to be obtained? It not only ſhews where our wants may be ſupplied, but our failures pardoned. Does any one doctrine, any one precept, of the Goſpel, deal in emollients, preſcribe palliatives, ſuggeſt petty reliefs, point out inferior remedies, ſpeak of any remedy, but ſuch as is proportioned to the depth of the diſeaſe?

Yet it is not uncommon for thoſe whoſe views have been low, and whoſe practice, conſequently, has not been high, to combine with this mediocrity of character the moſt exalted expectation of future recompence; to couple a comparatively low faith and conduct with thoſe lofty promiſes which the New Teſtament holds out to the moſt exalted Chriſtian. Many in the day of health and activity would have conſidered "taking up

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up the croſs," "living to him who died for them," &c. &c. as figurative expreſſions, lively images, not exacting much practical obedience; nay, would have conſidered the propoſal of bringing them into action as downright enthuſiaſm; yet who has not heard theſe perſons, in a dangerous ſickneſs, repeat with entire ſelf-application the glorious and hard-earned exultation of him, who, after unrivalled ſufferings and unparalleled ſervices, after having been "in deaths oft," after having been even favoured with a glimpſe of heaven, exclaims, "I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe," — and then go on, with the moſt deluſive complacency, to apply to themſelves the ſublime apoſtrophe with which this fine exclamation is wound up,— "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory," &c. &c.: and it has paſſed into an accredited phraſe, when one of this ſort of Chriſtians ſpeaks of the death of another in the ſame claſs, to obſerve, with an air of triumph, that *he is gone to his reward.*

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We muſt confeſs, that when we hear this aſſurance ſo applied, we charitably incline to hope it is not ſo bad with them as the expreſſion implies; becauſe, if heaven is thus aſſigned as a payment of work done, one cannot help trembling at a reward apportioned to ſuch worth. For theſe contractors for heaven, who bring their merit as their purchaſe-money, and intend to be ſaved at their own expence, do not always take care to be provided with a very exorbitant ſum, though they expect ſo large a return in exchange for it; while thoſe who, placing no dependance on their works, never dare to draw upon heaven for the payment, will often be found to have a much larger ſtock upon hand, ready to produce as an evidence, though they renounce them as a claim. In both caſes, is it not ſafer to transfer them and ourſelves from merit to mercy, as a more humble and leſs hazardous ground of dependance?

Far be from me the uncharitable preſumption, that theſe ſanguine perſons are deſtitute

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deſtitute of principle, or void of right intentions. Doubtleſs, in many inſtances, they perſevere in error for no reaſon, but becauſe they believe it to be truth. There is even much that is right in them; but are they not too eaſily ſatisfied with a low meaſure of that right, without examining accurately the quality of the practice, merely becauſe it is not diſreputable?

Our knowledge of religion and ſound morals muſt inevitably ariſe, in a good meaſure, from the knowledge of ourſelves. Now, the kind of reading of which we have complained, is ſo far from improving that knowledge, that it keeps it out of our ſight, by repreſenting us to ourſelves as other creatures than we really are. The moſt ingenious abſtract reaſoning on man will not ſhew him what ſort of being he is, if he be not taught to know it within himſelf. He muſt ſeek it in the depths of his own mind, and compare what he finds there with the unerring law of God. The facts he might deduce, and the experiments he might make

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from the ſtudy of both in conjunction, would teach him either to confirm or correct his theory; his experience, if it did not eſtabliſh, would overturn his ſpeculations, and he would begin to build on new ground.

May we not be allowed with all tenderneſs and reſpect, not with the arrogance of any ſuperiority, but ſuch as is the inevitable fruit of long obſervation, to ſuggeſt a few of the many remedies againſt the evil we have been regretting? The true preliminary to vital religion is to feel and acknowledge our lapſed humanity. There is no entrance into the temple of Chriſtianity but through this lowly veſtibule. All the diſſertations of the moſt profound philoſophers on the reaſonableneſs and beauty of our religion, on its excellence and ſuperiority, are but a fruitleſs exerciſe of ingenuity and eloquence, if they exclude this fundamental truth. The ableſt writer, if he does not feel this conviction in his own heart, will never carry it to yours. But if you have once got over this hard and humbling introduction, the ſame divine

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divine guide who has given this initiatory opening, will, to the patient and perſevering enquirer, perfect the work he has ſo happily begun. While he who turns over the page of his own virtues, and ranſacks the catalogue of his good actions, will find that, under the pretence of ſeeking conſolation, he is evading inſtruction; he is only heaping up materials for building confidence in himſelf — "by that ſin fell the angels" — and may be in little leſs danger than the flagitious offender. Our Lord has decided on this momentous queſtion, by his preference of the ſelf-abaſing penitent who had nothing to aſk but mercy, to him who had nothing to requeſt but praiſe; of the lowly confeſſor of his offences to the pompous recounter of his virtues; whoſe prayer, if ſelf-panegyric deſerves that name, plainly declared that he already poſſeſſed ſo much, that there was nothing left for him to aſk. Our Saviour took this occaſion to let us ſee, that he is better pleaſed when we ſhew him our wants, than our merits.

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As you do not live in the practice or the allowance of vices, which make it your intereſt to wiſh that Chriſtianity may be falſe, and as you believe its external evidences, endeavour to gain alſo an internal conviction that it is true. Examine alſo into the principle of your beſt actions. Even ſome who have made a more conſiderable proficiency, are too apt to defer examining into the motive, till they have concluded the act which the motive ſhould have determined; they then, as it were, make up the motive to the act, and bring about the accordance in a way to quiet their own minds. Perhaps intereſt is acting on an opinion which we fancied that wiſdom had ſuggeſted. If it ſucceed, we compliment ourſelves on the event; if it fail, we applaud ourſelves on the aſſigned, becauſe we are not quite ſure of the real, motive.

The way to make a progreſs in piety and peace, is not to be too tender of our preſent feelings; is nobly to make ſome ſacrifice of immediate eaſe, for the ſake of acquiring future

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future happineſs. Deſire not opiates, ſeek not anodynes, when your internal conſtitution requires ſtimulants. Ceaſe to conceive of religion as a ſtationary thing; be aſſured, that, to be available, it muſt be progreſſive. Read the Scriptures, not as a form, but as God's great appointed means, of infuſing into your heart that life-giving principle which is the ſpring of all right practice. Cultivate every virtue, but reſt not in any. Do every thing to deſerve the eſteem of men, but make not that eſteem your governing principle. Value not moſt thoſe qualities which are the moſt popular. Correct your worldly wiſdom with "the wiſdom which is from above." Bear in your recollection, that, to minds of a ſoft and yielding caſt, the world is a more formidable enemy than thoſe two other rival tempters which the New Teſtament commonly aſſociates with it, and which would not, generally, have made a third in ſuch corrupt company, if its dangers had not borne ſome proportion to theirs. It is the more neceſ-

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ſary to preſs this point, as the miſchiefs of the world are felt without being ſuſpected. The other two ſpiritual enemies ſeize on the more corrupt; but the better diſpoſed are the unconſcious victims of the world, which frequently betrays its votary into the hands of its two confederates. People are inclined to be pleaſed with themſelves when the world flatters them; they make the world their ſupreme arbiter; they are unwilling to appeal from ſo lenient a judge; and, being ſatisfied with themſelves, when its verdict is in their favour, the applauſe of others too often, by confirming their own, ſuperſedes an inquiry into their real ſtate.

The unconfirmed Chriſtian attends to his conduct juſt in thoſe points which, though diſhoneſt, are not diſhonourable; points in which, though religion will be againſt him, the approbation of the world will bear him out. He would not do a diſreputable thing, but ſhould a temptation ariſe where his reputation is ſafe, there his trial commences,

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mences, there he muſt guard himſelf with augmented vigilance.

The more enlightened the conſcience becomes, the more we ſhall diſcover the unſpeakable holineſs of God. But our perceptions being cleared, and our ſpiritual diſcernment rendered more acute, this muſt not lead us to fancy that we are worſe than when we thought ſo well of ourſelves. We are not worſe, becauſe the growing light of divine truth reveals faults unobſerved before to our view, or enlarges thoſe we thought inſignificant. Light does not create impurities, it only diſcloſes them. Moreover, this efficient ſpirit does not illuminate without correcting; it is not only given for reproof, but amendment; not only for amendment, but conſolation. Our unhappineſs does not conſiſt in that contrition which grows out of our new acquaintance with our own hearts. The true miſery conſiſted in the blindneſs, preſumption, and ſelf-ſufficiency, which our ignorance of ourſelves generated. Our true felicity begins in our

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being brought, however ſevere be the means, to renounce our ſelf-confidence, and caſt ourſelves entirely upon God.

It will be a good teſt of the improving ſtate of a perſon of the above deſcription, when he can patiently, though not at firſt pleaſantly, perſevere in the peruſal of works which do not flatter his ſecurity; nay, to perſevere the more earneſtly, becauſe the peruſal diſcovers his own character to himſelf. When once he is brought to endure theſe ſalutary probings, he will ſoon be brought to court the hand that probes. He will begin to diſreliſh the vapid civility with which the ſuperficial examiner treats human nature. Nay, he may now ſafely meditate on the *dignity* of man, which, in his former ſtate, ſo far miſled him. He will find that, in another ſenſe, the doctrine is true. Man was indeed originally a dignified creature, for he was made in the image of the perfect God. Even now, though his will is depraved, yet he has noble intellectual faculties which give ſome notion of what he was.

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was. His heart is alienated, but his underſtanding approves the rectitude which his will rejects. He has ſtill recoverable powers; he is ſtill capable, when divine truth ſhall have made its full impreſſion on his ſoul, of that renovation which ſhall reſtore him to the dignity he has loſt, re-inſtate him in the favour he has forfeited, and raiſe him infinitely higher than the elevation from which he has fallen.

To thoſe who attempt to relieve his temporary diſtreſs by directing his eyes to his own virtues, and to the approbation thoſe virtues are certain to obtain from Heaven, he will reply with the illuſtrious ſufferer of old, "Miſerable comforters are ye all!" Slight remedies will no longer ſatisfy him. The more deep his views become, the leſs he will be diſpoſed to claim his ſhare in the compliments laviſhed on the natural human character.

But oh! what unſpeakable conſolation will the humble believer derive from the appellation by which the divine ſpirit is deſig-

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designated — The COMFORTER. There is something sublimely merciful in a dispensation, of which the term is so delightfully expressive of the thing. We read in Scripture of *grieving* the Holy Spirit; but, when we consider him under this most soothing character, is there not something of peculiar and heinous ingratitude in *grieving the Comforter?*

To endeavour to obtain a more lively belief in the existence, and earnestly to implore the aid of this quickening spirit, would be a great means of improving the character. That the doctrine of spiritual influence is a practical doctrine, is clearly deducible from the command, arising out of the conviction, that the truth was already received— "If ye *live* in the spirit, *walk* in the spirit." Observe that we press you only on your own principles: we recommend you only to act upon the creed you avow. If we suggest to your adoption any thing further than the Bible enjoins, we are guilty of fanaticism; and you should be on your guard against it. We venture not to say what name is due to

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thoſe who would depreſs your views greatly below either.

In peruſing the Scriptures, might you not commune with your own heart in ſomething like the following language: —" This book is not a work of fancy. I do not, therefore, read it for amuſement, but inſtruction; but am I ſeriouſly propoſing to read it like one who has a deep intereſt in its contents? Is it my ſincere intention to convert the knowledge I am about to acquire into any practical application to my own caſe? Is it my earneſt wiſh to improve the ſtate of my own heart by comparing it with what I allow to be the only perfect rule of faith and practice? Do I only read to get over my morning's taſk, the omiſſion of which would make me uneaſy, merely to faſten a ſeries of facts on my memory? or do I really deſire to make the great truths of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the neceſſity of a living faith, a ſound repentance, an entire conviction that, of myſelf, I can do nothing; not merely a ſpecu-

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ſpeculative ſyſtem to be recognized at church, but to be transfuſed into the life? Do I adopt religion as an hereditary, national profeſſion, neceſſary to my credit, or as a thing in which I have a momentous perſonal intereſt? Do I propoſe to apply what I read to the pulling down thoſe high imaginations, and that falſe ſecurity of which my Bible ſhews me the danger, and which its doctrines are calculated to ſubdue? Do I labour after the attainment of thoſe heavenly diſpoſitions, the exhibition of which I have been admiring? Have theſe vivid declarations of the unſatisfactorineſs of the world at all cooled my ardour for its enjoyments? Shall I read here this holy contempt for the littleneſs of its purſuits, this diſplay of its fallacies and deceits, and yet return this very evening to the participation of diverſions, the expoſure of whoſe emptineſs I have been approving? Shall I extol the writer who ſtrips off its painted maſk from the world, and yet act as if the morning lecture had brought no ſuch diſcovery? Nay, perhaps,

it

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it may be one of my ſubjects of converſation, to recommend a book, of whoſe little efficiency in my own caſe I am giving a practical example.

Do I not periodically pray, "Make me to be numbered with thy ſaints in glory everlaſting," and yet am I not as ſhy of the ſociety of thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed for more than common ſanctity, as if it carried contamination with it? And does not the very term convey to my mind a diſcreditable idea, compounded of fanaticiſm and hypocriſy?

After all, I may have been wrong. If reſpectability were ſecurity, the young ruler in the Goſpel had been in no danger, for his attainments were above the ordinary ſtandard, and his credit was probably high. It is time to come to ſomething like certainty; to inquire, whether I do cordially believe what I ſhould be aſhamed not to profeſs; whether my religion lives in my memory or my heart, on my lips or in my life, in my profeſſion or my practice? It is time to

examine

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examine, whether I have much more diſtinct evidences of divine truth than thoſe who do not acknowledge the Goſpel to be a revelation from heaven; to inquire, why, if my underſtanding be ſomewhat more enlightened, ſuch illumination is not more perceptible on my heart? "Why the fruits of the Spirit," ſo far from "abounding" in me, ſcarcely appear, if thoſe fruits are indeed "love, peace, and joy in believing!"

Let not the fear of labour, or the dread of pain, prevent you from endeavouring to obtain a clear view of your ſtate. Let not a puſillanimous apprehenſion of reproach or ridicule prevent your following up your convictions. There is not any thing that is unreaſonable, much leſs any thing that is impoſſible, required: no degree of zeal, or meaſure of earneſtneſs, but what you ſee every day exerted in a worſe cauſe. Take your meaſure from the world, not in *what* you ſhall purſue, but in the energy with which you ſhall urge the purſuit. Only devote to religion as much time as the worldly devote

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devote to diſſipation; only ſet your affections on Heaven as intenſely as theirs are ſet upon earth, and all will be well: or take your meaſure from your former ſelf; take at leaſt as much pains to ſecure your eternal intereſts as you have formerly taken to acquire a language or an art. Read the word of inſpiration with the ſame aſſiduity with which you have ſtudied a favourite claſſic. Strive with as much energy to acquire a thorough inſight into the corruptions of your heart, and the remedy propoſed for their cure, as you have exerted in ſtudying the principles of your profeſſion, or the myſteries of your calling. Inſpect your conſciences as accurately as your expences; be as frugal of your time as of your fortune, and as careful of your ſoul as of your credit. Be neither terrified by terms, nor governed by them.

In reading thoſe heart-ſearching writers, whoſe principles are drawn from the ſource of all truth, and who are only to be truſted as they are analogous to it, be not offended with ſome ſtrong expreſſions. They expreſſed

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preſſed forcibly what they felt powerfully. The revolting term of *ſinner*, which has, perhaps, made you throw aſide the book, as thinking it addreſſed only to the perpetrators of great crimes, as fitter language for the priſons and the hulks, than for the poliſhed and the pleaſing, is addreſſed to every one, however profound his knowledge, however decent his life, however amiable his manners, who lives without habitual reference to God. Be more than honeſt, be courageous; boldly apply it to yourſelf. Though your character is unſtained with any diſgraceful vice, though you regularly fulfil many relative duties, yet if you are deſtitute of the prime duty, the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus, you ſtand in need of ſuch a forcible addreſs as we have been ſuppoſing. The diſcovery will be no diſhonour. The diſhonour conſiſts in not feeling your ſtate, in not ſtruggling againſt it; in not applying with humble fervour for aſſiſtance to the Fountain of grace and mercy.

Take

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Take comfort that you have great advantages over many others. You have few bad habits to retract; you have no ſcandalous vices to combat; you have already with certain perſons acquired a degree of influence by your good qualities; with others, you have acquired it by your very defects, and, as you are not ſuſpected of enthuſiaſm, your uſefulneſs will not be impeded by having that ſuſpicion to repel. You will continue to do, in many reſpects, the ſame things which you did before. The exterior of your life may be in many points nearly the ſame. But, even the ſame actions will be done in another ſpirit and to another end. Religion will not convert you into miſanthropes, inſenſible to all the dear affections which make life pleaſant. It does not wiſh to ſend you with the hermits of old to the deſarts of Thebais, it only wiſhes you to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in your own families, and among your own connections. Not one of the proper forms and harmleſs habits of poliſhed ſociety will

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be impaired, they will be rather improved by this mutation of the mind. Chriſtian humility will be aiding all the beſt purpoſes of good breeding, while it will furniſh a higher principle for its exerciſe. You may expreſs this change in your character by what name you pleaſe, ſo that the change be but effected. It is not what you are called, but what you are, which will make the ſpecific diſtinction between the character you adopt, and that which you have quitted. You read the Bible now, but between reading it mechanically and ſpiritually, there is as much difference, as between pouring a fluid on the ground and diſtilling it. The one "cannot be gathered up" afterwards; from the other, we extract drop by drop, a precious and powerful eſſence.

Search, then, diligently the word of eternal life, enriched and ennobled as it is with the chain and the accompliſhment of its prophecies, with the ſplendour of its miracles; with the atteſtation of its martyrs, the conſiſtency of its doctrines; the importance of

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of its facts; the plenitude of its precepts; the treasury of its promises; the irradiations of the spirit; the abundance of its consolations; the peace it bestows; the blessedness it announces; the proportion of its parts; the symmetry of the whole; — altogether presenting such a fund of instruction to the mind, of light to the path, of document to the conduct, of satisfaction to the heart, as demonstrably prove it to be the instrument of God for the salvation of man.

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CHAP. XIX.

On Habits.

HABITS are thoſe powers of the mind which ariſe from a collection or rather a ſucceſſive courſe of ordinary actions. As they are formed by a concatenation of thoſe actions, ſo they may be weakened by frequent and allowed interruptions; and if many contiguous links are wilfully broken, the habits themſelves are in danger of being totally demoliſhed.

If we may be allowed to change the metaphor, we would obſerve that good habits produce a ſound healthy conſtitution of mind: they are tonics which gradually, but infallibly, invigorate the intellectual man. A ſilent courſe of habits is a part of our character or rather conduct, which in a great meaſure depends on induſtry and application; on ſelf-denial and watchfulneſs; on

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on diligence in eſtabliſhing right purſuits, and vigilance in checking ſuch as are pernicious. Habit being an engine put into our hands for the nobleſt and moſt beneficial purpoſes; and being one, which, having the free command of our own faculties, we have a power to uſe and direct — a power, indeed, derived from God as all our other poſſeſſions are — yet having this power, it reſts with ourſelves whether we ſhall improve it by a vigorous exertion in a right bent, or whether we ſhall turn it againſt our Maker, and direct the courſe of our conduct to the offending, inſtead of pleaſing God.

Habits are not ſo frequently formed by vehement incidental efforts on a few great occaſions, as by a calm and ſteady perſeverance in the ordinary courſe of duty. If this were uniformly followed up, we ſhould be ſpared that occaſional violence to our feelings, that agitating reſiſtance, which, by waſting the ſpirits, leads more feeble minds to dread the recurrence of the ſame neceſ-

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fity which induces a painful feeling, the conſequence of negligence, even where there is real rectitude of heart; while the regular adoption of right habits, indented by repetition, eſtabliſhes ſuch a tranquillity of ſpirit, as contributes to promote happineſs no leſs than virtue. The mind, like the body, gains robuſtneſs and activity by the habitual exerciſe of its powers. Occaſional right actions may be caprice, may be vanity, may be impulſe, but hardly deſerve the name of virtue, till they proceed from a principle which habit has moulded into a frame; then the right principle which firſt ſet them at work continues to keep them at it, and finally becomes ſo prevalent, that there is a kind of ſpontaneity in the act, which keeps up the energy, without conſtant ſenſible reference to the ſpring which firſt ſet it in motion.

The more uniform is our conformity to the rules of virtue and purity, the leſs we may require to be reminded of the particular influence of the motive. We need not,

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not, nor indeed can we, recur every moment to the exact ſource of the action; its flowing from an habitual ſenſe of duty will generally explain the ground on which it is performed. If the heart is kept awake and alive in a cheerful obedience to God, the immediate motive of the immediate act is not likely to be a bad one. Many actions, indeed, require to be deliberated on, and whatever requires deliberation before we do it, demands ſcrutiny why we do it. This will lead to ſuch an inqueſt into our motive as, if there be any want of ſincerity in it, will tend to its detection.

Notwithſtanding what has been urged above as to the exerciſe of conſtant aſſiduity in preference to mere occaſional exertion, we would be underſtood to offer this counſel rather to the proficient than to the novice. As the beginnings are always difficult, eſpecially to ardent ſpirits, ſuch ſpirits would do well, particularly at their entrance on a more correct courſe, to ſelect for themſelves ſome ſingle taſk of painful exertion, which,

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by bringing their mental vigour into full play, ſhall afford them ſo ſenſible an evidence of the conqueſt they have obtained, as will more than repay the labour of the conflict. A friend of the Author was ſo fully aware of the importance of thus taming an impatient temper, that ſhe impoſed upon herſelf the habit of beginning even any ordinary undertaking with the moſt difficult part of it, inſtead of following the uſual method of proceeding from the lower to the higher. If a language was to be learnt, ſhe began with a very difficult author. If a ſcheme of economy was to be improved, ſhe relinquiſhed at once ſome prominent indulgence; if a vanity was to be cut off, ſhe fixed on ſome ſtrong act of ſelf-denial which ſhould appear a little diſreputable to others, while it ſomewhat mortified herſelf. Theſe incipient trials once got over, ſhe had a large reward in finding all leſſer ones in the ſame claſs comparatively light. The main victory was gained in the onſet, the ſubſequent ſkirmiſhes coſt little.

If

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If it be ſaid that the effort is too violent, the change too ſudden, we apprehend the aſſertion is a miſtake. When we have worked up ourſelves, or rather are worked up by a ſuperior agency to a ſtrong meaſure, it becomes a point of honour, as well as of duty, to perſiſt; we are aſhamed of ſtopping ſhort, and eſpecially of retreating, though we have no witneſs but God and our own hearts. Having once perſevered, the victory is the reward. A ſlower change, though deſirable, has leſs ſtimulus, leſs animation, is leſs ſenſibly marked; we cannot recur, as in the other caſe, to the hour of conqueſt, nor have we ſo clear a conſcioufneſs of having obtained it.

But the fruits of the initiatory victory may be loſt, if vigilance does not guard that which valour ſubdued. If the relinquiſhment of evil habits is ſo difficult, it is not leſs neceſſary to be watchful, leſt we ſhould inſenſibly ſlide into the negligence of ſuch as are good. What we neglect, we gradually forget. This guard againſt declenſion is the

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more requiſite, as the human mind is ſo limited, that one object quickly expels another. A new idea takes poſſeſſion as ſoon as its predeceſſor is driven out; and the very traces of former habits are effaced, not ſuddenly, but progreſſively; no two ſucceſſive ideas being, perhaps, very diſſimilar, while the laſt in the train will be of a character quite different, not from that which immediately preceded, but from that which firſt began to draw us off from the right habit; the impreſſion continues to grow fainter, till that which at firſt was weakened, is at length obliterated.

If we do not eſtabliſh the habit of the great ſtateſman of Holland, to do only one thing at a time, we ſhall do nothing well; the whole of our underſtanding, however highly we may rate it, is not too much to give to any ſubject which is of ſufficient importance to require inveſtigation at all; certainly is not great enough to afford being ſplit into as many parts, as we may chuſe to take ſubjects ſimultaneouſly in hand. If we allow

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allow the different topics which require deliberation to break in on each other; if a ſecond is admitted to a conference, before we have diſmiſſed the firſt, as neither will be diſtinctly conſidered, ſo neither is likely to obtain a juſt deciſion. Theſe deſultory purſuits obſtruct the eſtabliſhment of correct habits.

But it requires the firm union of a ſound principle with an impartial judgment to aſcertain that the habit is really good, or the miſchief will be great in proportion to the pertinacity. For who can conceive a more miſerable ſtate, than for a man to be goaded on by a long perſeverance in habits, which both his conſcience and his underſtanding condemn? Even if upon conviction he renounces them, he has a long time to ſpend in backing, with the mortification at laſt, to find himſelf only where he ought to have been at ſetting out.

Without inſiſting on the difficulty of totally ſubduing long-indulged habits of any groſs vice, ſuch as intemperance; we may

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remark, that it requires a long and painful proceſs — and this even after a man is convinced of its turpitude, after he diſcovers evident marks of improvement—to conquer the habits of any fault, which, though not ſo ſcandalous in the eyes of the world, may be equally inconſiſtent with real piety. — Take the love of money for inſtance. How reluctantly, if at all, is covetouſneſs extirpated from the heart, where it has long been rooted! The imperfect convert has a conviction on his mind, nay he has a feeling in his heart, that there is no ſuch thing as being a Chriſtian without liberality. This he adopts, in common with other juſt ſentiments, and ſpeaks of it as a neceſſary evidence of ſincerity. He has gotten the whole Chriſtian theory by heart, and ſuch parts of it as do not trench upon this long-indulged corruption, he more or leſs brings into action. But in this tender point, though the profeſſion is cheap, the practice is coſtly. An occaſion is brought home to him, of exerciſing the grace he has been commending.

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ing. He acknowledges its force, he does more, he feels it. If taken at the moment, ſomething conſiderable might be done; but if any delay intervene, that delay is fatal; for from feeling, he begins to calculate. Now there is a cooling property in calculation, which freezes the warm current that ſenſibility had ſet in motion. The old habit is too powerful for the young convert, yet he flatters himſelf that he has at once exerciſed charity and diſcretion. He takes comfort both from the liberal feeling which had reſolved to give the money, and the prudence which had ſaved it, laying to his heart the flattering unction, that he has only ſpared it for ſome more preſſing demand, which, when it occurs, will again ſet him on feeling, and calculating, and ſaving.

Some well-meaning perſons unintentionally confirm this kind of error. They are ſo zealous on the ſubject of ſudden converſion, that they are too ready to pronounce, from certain warm expreſſions, that this change has taken place in their acquaint-

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ance, while evident ſymptoms of an unchanged nature continue to diſfigure the character. They do not always wait till an alteration in the habits has given that beſt evidence of an interior alteration. They dwell ſo excluſively on miraculous changes, that they leave little to do for the convert, but to conſider himſelf as an inactive recipient of grace; not as one who is to exhibit, by the change in his life, that mutation, which the divine ſpirit has produced on his heart. This too common error appears to ariſe, not only from enthuſiaſm, but partly from want of inſight into the human character, of which habits are the ground-work, and in which right habits are not leſs the effect of grace for being gradually produced. We cannot, indeed, purify ourſelves, any more than we can convert ourſelves, it being equally the work of the Holy Spirit to infuſe purity, as well as the other graces, into the heart; but it reſts with us to exerciſe this grace, to reduce this purity to a habit, elſe the Scriptures would not

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not have been so abundant in injunctions to this duty.

"We must hate sin," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "in all its dimensions, in all its distances, and in every angle of its reception." St. Paul felt this scrupulousness of Christian delicacy to such an extent, that, in intimating the commission of certain enormities to the church of Ephesus, he charged that *they should not be so much as named among them.* This great master in the science of human nature, a knowlege perfected by grace, was aware that the very mention of some sins might be a temptation to commit them; he would not have the mind intimate with the thought, nor the imagination in contact with the expression, nor the tongue familiar with the sound. He who knew all the minuter entrances, as well as the broader avenues to the corrupt heart of man, knew how much safer it is to avoid than to combat, how much easier is retreat than victory. He was aware, that purity of heart and thought

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could alone produce purity of life and conduct.

From the unhappy want of this early habit of reſtraint, many, who are become ſincerely pious, find it very difficult to extricate their minds from certain aſſociations eſtabliſhed by former habits. Corrupt books and evil communications have at once left a ſenſe of abhorrence on their hearts, with an indelible impreſſion on their memory. They find it almoſt impoſſible to get rid of ſallies of imagination, which, though they once admired as wit, they now conſider as little leſs than blaſphemy. The will rejects them; but they cling to the recollection with fatal pertinacity. Vices, not only of the conduct, but of the imagination, long indulged, leave a train of almoſt inextinguiſhable corruptions behind them. Theſe are evils, of which even the reformed heart does not eaſily get clear. He who repents ſuddenly, will too often be purified ſlowly. A corrupt practice may be aboliſhed, but a ſoiled imagination is not eaſily cleanſed.

We

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We repeat, that these rooted habits, even after the act has been long hated and discontinued, may persist in tormenting him who has long repented of the sin, so as to keep him to the last in a painful and distressing doubt as to his real state; but if this doubt continue to make him more vigilant, and to keep alive his humility, the uneasiness it causes may be more salutary than a greater confidence of his own condition. Many have complained, after years of sincere reformation, that they did not possess that peace and consolation which religion promises; not suspecting, that their long adherence to wrong habits may naturally darken their views and cloud their enjoyments. Surely the man whose mind has abandoned itself for years to improper indulgences has little right to complain, if bitterness accompany his repentance, if dejection break in on his peace. Surely he has little right to murmur, if those consolations are refused to him, which, in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, are sometimes withheld from good

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good men, who have never been guilty of his irregularities in conduct, who have never indulged his diſorders of heart and mind. When we ſee holy men, to whom this cheerful confidence is ſometimes denied, or from whom, in the agonies of diſſolving nature, it is withdrawn, ſhall they whoſe caſe we have been conſidering, complain, if theirs are not all halcyon days, if their cloſing hour is rather contrite than triumphant? But this, if it be not a ſtate of joy, may be equally a ſtate of ſafety.

The duty of keeping up this ſenſe of purity is of great extent. One of the many uſes of prayer is, that, by the habit of breathing out our inmoſt thoughts to God, the ſenſe of his being, the conſciouſneſs of his preſence, the idea that his pure eye is immediately upon us, imparts a temporary purity to the ſoul, which it vainly aims to maintain in an equal degree in its intercourſe with mankind. The beatitude of the promiſed viſion of God is more immediately annexed to this grace: and it is elſewhere ſaid,

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ſaid, "that every one who hath this hope, purifieth himſelf, as He is pure." The holy felicity of the creature is thus made to depend on its aſſimilation with the Creator. There is a beautiful intimation of the purity of God in the order of conſtruction in the prayer taught by our Saviour. We pray that *his name may be hallowed;* that is, that our hearts, and the hearts of all men, may honour his holy name; may be deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of his purity and holineſs, before we proceed to the ſubſequent petitions. We thus inveſt our minds with this preparatory ſentiment, in order to ſanctify what we are about to implore. In addition to the neceſſity of ſtated prayer for the promotion of purity, it may be obſerved, that if, by habitual devotion, we bend our thoughts into that courſe, they will in time almoſt voluntarily purſue it. The good effect of prayer will, on our return to ſociety, be much increaſed by the practice of occaſionally darting up to Heaven, a ſhort ejaculation, a laudatory ſentence, or ſome brief ſpon-

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ſpontaneous effuſion. This will aſſiſt to ſtir up the flame which was kindled by the morning ſacrifice, and preſerve it from total extinction before that of the evening is offered up. We may learn from the profane practice of ſome, that an ejaculation takes as little time, and obtrudes leſs on notice, than an oath or an exclamation. It implores, in as few words, the ſame divine power for a bleſſing, whom the other obteſts for deſtruction.

One great benefit of ſcience is allowed to be derived from its habituating the mind to ſhake off its dependance upon ſenſe. Devout meditation, in like manner, accuſtoms it not to fly for ſupport to ſenſible and material things, but to reſt in ſuch as are intellectual and ſpiritual. By a general neglect of ſerious thinking, virtue is ſometimes withered and decayed; in minds where it is not torn up by the roots, there remains in them that vital ſap which may ſtill, upon habitual cultivation, not only vegetate, but produce fruit.

One

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One great obſtacle to habitual meditation muſt not be paſſed over. It is the pernicious cuſtom of ſubmitting to the uncontrolled dominion of a roving imagination. This prolific faculty produces ſuch a conſtant budding of images, fancies, viſions, conjectures, and conceits, that ſhe can ſubſiſt plentifully on her own independent ſtock. She is perpetually wandering from the point to which ſhe promiſed to confine herſelf when ſhe ſet out; is ever roaming from the ſpot to which her powerleſs poſſeſſor had threatened to pin her down. We retire with a reſolution to reflect: Reaſon has no ſooner marſhalled her forces, than this undiſciplined run-away eſcapes from duty, one ſtraggler after another joins the enemy, or brings home ſome foreign impertinence. While we meant to indulge only a harmleſs reflection, we are brought under ſubjection to a whole ſeries of reveries of different characters and oppoſite deſcriptions. Freſh trains obliterate our firſt ſpeculations, till the ſpirit ſinks into a ſort of deliquium. We have

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have nothing for it, but reſolutely to reſiſt the enfeebling deſpot. Let us ſtir up ſome counteracting force: let us fly to ſome active employment which ſhall break the charm, and diſſolve the pleaſant thraldom. No matter what, ſo it be innocent and oppoſite. We ſhall not cure ourſelves by the ſturdieſt reſolution not to do this thing which is complained of, unleſs we compel ourſelves to do ſomething elſe. Courageous exertion is the only conqueror of irreſolution: vigorous action the only ſupplanter of idle ſpeculation.

Habits are not arbitrary ſyſtems and predetermined ſchemes. They are not always laid down deliberately as plans to be purſued, but ſteal upon us inſenſibly; inſinuate themſelves into a train of ſucceſſive repetitions, till we find ourſelves in bondage to them, before we are aware they have gotten any faſt hold over us. But if rooted bad habits are of ſuch difficult extirpation, that, as we have already obſerved, they not only deſtroy the peace of him who continues them, but embitter

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embitter the very penitence of him who has forſaken them, there is a claſs of beings in whom they are not yet inveterate. If I could ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels, never could they be employed to a more important purpoſe, than in repreſenting to my youthful readers the bleſſedneſs of avoiding ſuch habits now, as may take a whole life to unlearn.

O you to whom opening life is freſh, and gay, and tempting! you who have yet your path to chooſe, whoſe hearts are ingenuous, and whoſe manners amiable, in whom, if wrong propenſities diſcover themſelves, yet evil habits are not ſubſtantially formed — could you be made ſenſible, at a leſs coſtly price than your own experience, that though, through the mercy of God, the long-erring heart may hereafter be brought to abhor its own ſin, yet the once initiated mind can never be made to unknow its knowledge, nor to unthink its thoughts; can never be brought to ſeparate thoſe combinations which it once too fondly cheriſhed: — how much future

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future regret, how much incurable ſorrow might you ſpare yourſelves! If you would but reflect that though, in reſpect of the paſt, you may become inwardly penitent, you cannot become as you now are, outwardly innocent, and that no repentance can reſtore your preſent happy ignorance of practiſed evil, — you would then keep clear of a bondage from which you perceive the older and the wiſer do not, becauſe they cannot, commonly emancipate themſelves.

But, ſuppoſing a young man is ſo happy as to eſcape the groſſer corruptions, yet, if he have a turn to wit and ridicule, he ſhould be ſingularly on his guard againſt the falſe credit which ludicrous aſſociations will obtain for him in certain ſocieties. An indelicate but pointed jeſt, a combination of ſome light thought with ſome ſcriptural expreſſion, a parody which makes a ſerious thing ridiculous, or a ſober one abſurd, — theſe are inſtruments by no means harmleſs, not only to him who handles them, but alſo in the hands of ſubalterns and copyiſts, who, having

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having, perhaps, no faculty but memory, and ſeldom uſing memory but for miſchief, retain with joy, and circulate from vanity, what was at firſt uttered with mere random thoughtleſſneſs. Profane dunces are the buſy echoes of the looſe wit of others. With little talent for original miſchief, but devoting that little to the worſt purpoſes, they pick up a kind of literary livelihood on the ſtray ſarcaſms and fugitive bon mots of others, and are maintained on what the witty throw away. If even in the firſt inſtance there were nothing wrong in the thing itſelf, there is miſchief in the connexion. Whatever ſerves to append a light thought to a ſerious one, is unſafe: both have, by frequent citation, been ſo accuſtomed to appear together, that when, in a better frame of mind, the good one is called up, the corrupt aſſociate never fails to preſent itſelf unbidden, and, like Pharaoh's blaſted corn, devours the wholeſome ear.

"Man," ſays one of the moſt ſagacious obſervers of man, Dr. Paley, "is a bundle of

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of habits." The more we attend to them, the more diſtinctly we ſhall perceive thoſe which are right, and the more dexterity we ſhall acquire in eſtabliſhing them. In ſetting out in our moral courſe, we can make little progreſs, unleſs we ſuffer ourſelves to be governed by certain rules; but when the rules are once worked into habits, they in a manner govern *us*. We loſe the ſenſe of that reſtraining power which was at firſt unpleaſant, though ſelf-impoſed. To illuſtrate this by an inſtance: — The accompliſhed orator is not fettered by recurring to the laws of the grammarian, nor the canons of the dialectician, though it was by being habitually trained in their reſpective ſchools, that he acquired both his accuracy and argument. Yet, while he is ſpeaking, it never occurs to him, that there are ſuch things in the world as grammar or logic. The rules are become habits, they have anſwered their end, and are diſmiſſed.

If we conſider the force of habit on amuſements: — ſtated diverſions enſlave us

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more by the cuſtom of making us feel the want of them, than by any poſitive pleaſure they afford. By being inceſſantly purſued, they diminiſh in their power of delighting; yet ſuch is the plaſtic power of habit, and ſuch the yielding ſubſtance of our minds, that they become arbitrary wants, abſolute articles, not of luxury, but neceſſity. Strange! that what is enjoyed without pleaſure cannot be diſcontinued without pain! The very hour when, the place where, the ſight of thoſe with whom they have been partaken, preſent aſſociations which we feel a kind of difficulty and uneaſineſs in ſeparating. We are partly cheated into this imaginary neceſſity, by ſeeing the eagerneſs with which others purſue them. Yet if it were not an artificial neceſſity, a want not ariſing from the conſtitution of our nature, thoſe would be unhappy who are deprived of them, or rather, who never enjoyed them. There is a reſpectable ſociety of Chriſtians among us who carry the reſtrictions

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ſtrictions of diverſions to the wideſt extent. Yet among the number of amiable, virtuous, and well-inſtructed young Quakers, whom I have known, I have always found them as cheerful and as happy as other people. Their cheerfulneſs was perhaps more intellectual than mirthful; but their happineſs never appeared to be impeded by complaints at the privation of pleaſures to which habit had not enſlaved them—a habit which, when carried too far, deſtroys the very end of pleaſure, that of invigorating the mind by relaxing it.

It is a proof that the Apoſtle conſidered converſion in general a gradual transformation, when he ſpoke of the renewing of the inward man *day by day;* this ſeems to intimate that good habits, under the influence of the Spirit of God, are continually advancing the growth of the Chriſtian, and conducting him to that maturity which is his conſummation and reward. The grace of repentance, like every other, muſt be eſtabliſhed by habit. Repentance is not

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completed by a ſingle act, it muſt be incorporated into our mind, till it become a fixed ſtate, ariſing from a continual ſenſe of our need of it. *Forgive us our treſpaſſes* would never have been enjoined as a daily petition, if daily repentance had not been neceſſary for daily ſins. The grand work of repentance, indeed, accompanies the change of heart; but that which is purified will not, in this ſtate of imperfection, neceſſarily remain pure. While we are liable to ſin, we muſt be habitually penitent.

A man may give evidence of his poſſeſſing many amiable qualities, without our being able to ſay, therefore, he is a good man. His virtues may be conſtitutional, their motives may be worldly. But when he exhibits clear and convincing evidence, that he has ſubdued all his inveterate bad habits, weeded out rooted evil propenſities; when the miſer is grown largely liberal, the paſſionate become meek, the calumniator charitable, the malignant kind; when every bad habit is not only eradicated, but ſucceeded by its

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oppoſite quality, we would conclude that ſuch a change could only be effected by power from on high — we would not ſcruple to call that man religious. But, above all, there muſt be a change wrought in the ſecret courſe of our thoughts; without this interior improvement, the abandonment of any wrong practice is no proof of an effectual alteration. This, indeed, we cannot make a rule by which to judge others, but it is an infallible one by which to judge ourſelves. Certain faults are the effect of certain temptations, rather than of that common depravity natural to all. But a general rectification of thought, a ſenſible revolution in the ſecret deſires and imaginations of the heart, is perhaps the leaſt equivocal of all the changes effected in us. This is not merely the cure of a particular diſeaſe, but the infuſion of a ſound principle of life and health, the general feeling of a renovated nature, the evidence of a new ſtate of conſtitution.

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Candid Chriſtians, however, who know experimentally the power of habit, who are aware of the remainders of evil in the beſt men, will not raſhly pronounce that he, who, while he is ſtruggling with ſome long-cheriſhed corruption, falls into an occaſional aberration from the path he is endeavouring to follow, is therefore not religious.

If our bad habits have ariſen from dangerous aſſociations, we muſt diſſolve the intercourſe, if we would obviate the danger. Good impreſſions may have been made on the heart, yet the indulged thought, and eſpecially the allowed ſight of that object which once melted down our better reſolutions, may melt them again. If we would conquer an invading enemy, we muſt not only fight him in the field, but cut off his proviſions. It may be difficult, but nothing ſhould repel the effort but what is impoſſible. Now in this there is no impoſſibility, becauſe the thing not being placed out of our reach, there needs only the con-

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currence of the will. If we humour this wayward will, it is at our peril. What we perſiſt in indulging, we ſhall every day find more difficult to reſtrain. Perhaps on our not reſiſting the very next temptation, will depend the future colour of our life — the very poſſibility of future reſiſtance. That which is now in our power, may, by repeated rejection, be judicially placed beyond it. Infirmity of purpoſe produces perpetual relapſes. Temptation ſtrengthens as reſiſtance weakens. We create, by criminal indulgences, an imbecility in the will, and then plead the weakneſs, not which we found, but made. Half meaſures produce more pain and no ſucceſs. They are compounded of deſire and regret, of appetite and fear, of indulgence and remorſe. While we are balancing, conditioning, temporizing, negotiating with conſcience, we might be ſinging Te Deum for the victory.

What force we take from the will by every repetition, we give to the habit. A faint

faint endeavour ends in a ſure defeat. Temptation becoming more importunate, if its incurſions are not reſiſted, if its attacks are not repelled, the habit will get final poſſeſſion of the mind; encouragement will invite repetition; where it has been once entertained, it will find a ready way; where it has been received with familiarity, expulſion will ſoon become difficult, and afterwards impoſſible. The Holy Spirit, whoſe aid perhaps we have faintly invoked, and firmly rejected, is withdrawn. But if we are ſincere in the invocation, we ſhall be firm in the reſiſtance; if we are fervent in the reſolution, we ſhall be triumphant in the conflict.

What we have inſiſted on is the more important, becauſe all progreſſive goodneſs conſiſts in habits; and virtuous habits, begun and carried on here with increaſing improvement and multiplied energies, are ſuſceptible of eternal proficiency. When we are aſſured that the effect of habits will not ceaſe with life, but be carried into eternity, it gives ſuch an elevation to the ideas, ſuch

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an expanſion to the ſoul, that it ſeems as if every hour were loſt in which we are not beginning or improving ſome virtuous habit.

As we were originally made in the image of God, ſo ſhall we, by the renovation of our minds, of which our improved habits is the beſt teſt, be reſtored, in an enlargement of our moral powers, to a nearer reſemblance of Him. Were it not that there is a participation, in all rational minds, of the ſame qualities in kind, though infinitely different in degree, the perfections of God would not ſo repeatedly be held out in Scripture as objects of our imitation. It would have been abſurd to have ſaid, "as he that hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy." — "Be ye holy, for I am holy," would not have been a reaſonable command, unleſs holineſs and purity had been one common moral quality of the nature, though unſpeakably diſtant in the proportion, between that perfect Being from whom whatever is good is derived, and the imperfect creature who

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who derives it. Surely it is not too much to ſay, that though we can only attain that low meaſure, of which our weak and ſinful nature is capable, yet ſtill to aim at imitating thoſe perfections, is a deſire natural to the renewed heart: and it may be conſidered as a ſymptom that no ſuch renovation has taken place, when no ſuch deſire is felt.

How could we attempt to trace the perfections of the divine nature, if he had not ſtamped on our mind ſome idea of thoſe perfections? We may bring theſe notions practically home to our own boſoms, poſſeſſing, as we do, not only natural ideas of the divine rectitude, but having theſe notions highly rectified, and confirmed by the Scripture repreſentation of God; if, inſtead of adopting abſtract reaſon for a rule of judging, which is often too unſubſtantial for our graſp, we ſet ourſelves to conſider what ſuch a perfect Being is likely to approve, or condemn, in human

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conduct, and then, comparing not only our deductions, but our practice, with the Gospel, adopt or reject what that approves or condemns.

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CHAP. XX.

On the Inconſiſtency of Chriſtians with Chriſtianity.

WE have, in two former chapters *, ventured to addreſs a claſs of Chriſtians whoſe lives are decorous, and whoſe manners are amiable; but who, from the want of having imbibed the vital ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and having, therefore, formed their principles on imperfect models, ſeem to have fallen ſhort of that excellence of which their characters are ſuſceptible.

We preſume now to addreſs a very different claſs; perſons acknowledging, indeed, the great truths of Chriſtianity, but living either in the neglect of the principles they profeſs, or in practical oppoſition to the theory they maintain; yielding to the tyranny of paſ-

* An Enquiry why ſome Good Sort of People are not better.

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ſion or of pleaſure, governed by the appetite or the caprice of the moment, and going on in a careleſs inattention to the duties inculcated by an authority they recognize. The lives of the perſons previouſly conſidered are commonly better than their profeſſion, the lives of thoſe now under contemplation are worſe. Theſe ſeem to have more faults, the other more prejudices. The others are ſatisfied to be ſtationary; theſe are not aware that they are retrograde. The former are in a far better ſtate; but there is hope that the latter may find out that they are in a bad one. The one reſt in their performances, with little doubt of their ſafety; the other, with a blind ſecurity, reſt in the promiſes, without putting themſelves in the way to profit by them.

If the whole indiviſible ſcheme of Chriſtianity could be ſplit into two portions, and either half were left to the option of theſe claſſes; thoſe formerly noticed would adopt the commandments from an aſſurance of being ſaved by their obeying them; theſe under

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under preſent conſideration, would chooſe the creed, from a notion that its mere adoption would go near to exonerate them from perſonal obedience. The others intend to earn heaven by their defective works: theſe, overlooking the neceſſity of holineſs, flatter themſelves, when they think at all, with the cheap ſalvation of a mental aſſent. Yet we all deſire to be finally ſaved. There is but one opinion about the end; we only differ about the means. Many fly to the merits of the Redeemer to obtain happineſs for themſelves hereafter, who do not deſire his ſpirit to govern their lives now, though he has ſo repeatedly declared, that he will not ſave us without renovating us. To ſuppoſe that we ſhall poſſeſs hereafter what we do not deſire here, that we ſhall complete then, what we do not think of beginning now, is among the inconſiſtencies of many who paſs muſter under the generic title of Chriſtians. The conteſt between heaven and earth ſeems to be reduced to one point, *which* ſhall poſſeſs the heart of man. The bent of

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our affections decides on the object of our purſuit. When they are rightly turned by his powerful hand, God has the predominance. It is the grand deſign of his word, of his ſpirit, of all his diſpenſations, whether providential or ſpiritual, to reſtore us to himſelf, to recover the heart which ſin has eſtranged from him. Where theſe inſtruments fail, the original bias governs, and the world has the entire poſſeſſion.

Proſpective prudence is eſteemed a mark of wiſdom by the world, and he who poſſeſſed the wiſdom which is from above, obſerves, that "the prudent man foreſeeth." Here the Bible and the world appear at firſt ſight to be in ſtrict accordance; but they differ materially, both as to the diſtance and the object of their forecaſt. How prudent do we reckon that man who denies himſelf preſent expences, and waves preſent enjoyments, that he may more effectually ſecure to himſelf future fortune! We obſerve that his diſcreet ſelf-denial will be amply rewarded by the increaſing means of after-indulgence.

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gence. But if this very man were to extend his views ſtill further, and look for the remuneration of his abſtinence, not to a future day, but to a future life, he would not, with his worldly friends, advance his character for wiſdom. While he looks to a diſtant point of time he is commended, but he forfeits the commendation, if he overlooks all time, and defers the fruition of his hope, till time ſhall be no more.

It is indeed this partial looking forward, this fixing the eye on ſome point of aggrandizement, or wealth, or ſome other diſtinction, which obſtructs our view of the final proſpect; or it is the exceſs of immediate gratification, the delights of ſenſe, the blandiſhments of the world, which prevent us even from thinking of it. While the ſenſualiſt incloſes himſelf in a narrow circle, beyond which his eye does not penetrate, the Chriſtian, like the warrior, ſteers his courſe not by his ſight but his compaſs. In any imminent diſtreſs, indeed, men almoſt naturally fly to their Maker. It is rather an impulſe

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impulſe than a principle. Yet it is in proſperity, that we moſt need his aſſiſtance. Succeſs, which is perhaps more eminently the hour of peril, is more rarely the hour of prayer. There is an intoxication attending on proſperous fortune, eſpecially while it is new, which diverts the ſpirits from communication with the Father of ſpirits. The ſlackening of devotion under ſucceſs ſeems to imply a conviction that, proſperity being a gift of God, our prayers have been heard; we have obtained his bleſſing, and, having the end of our prayers granted, we inſenſibly leſſen our endeavours to pleaſe Him whom our ſucceſs induces us to believe that we have already pleaſed. Thus, having made things even, men ſeem to ſet out on a new career; they plan new indulgences, additional projects of ſplendor, or of gratification; they aſſiduouſly multiply thoſe pleaſant inſtances of obedience which the poet has flatteringly told us we give when we "enjoy." But the object of enjoyment

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is not ſeldom the inſtrument of deſtruction. Anacreon was choaked by a grape-ſtone.

But, if prayer to the Fountain of all good *is* occaſionally offered up by the negligent Chriſtian, it is not likely to be heard, becauſe it is not his own prayer. We do not mean, becauſe it is the compoſition of another; that, as it does not leſſen its value, does not obſtruct its acceptance. If the feelings go along with the petitions, they will be heard; if the affections are bound up with the words, they will be accepted. It is not becauſe they are forms, but becauſe the little intereſt taken in them, renders them mere forms. It is not becauſe they are pre-compoſed, but becauſe they are uſed with conſtraint — are repetitions, not effuſions. It is uſing them without that condition of mind, without that cordial voluntary approach to the divine preſence, to which is annexed the gracious promiſe of being in *no-wiſe* caſt out; of that ſtate of mind which David ſuggeſted when he ſaid, "My heart (not my lips) hath talked of

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Thee:" when, in anſwer to the command, "Seek ye my face," warm and inſtant from the heart he fervently replied, "Thy face, Lord, will I ſeek."

If it be objected, that we can no more pray up to ſcriptural expreſſions, than we can live up to ſcriptural injunctions, does not the one, equally with the other, indicate the high aſpiring nature of religion? Does it not remind us, that our aims muſt be always more lofty than the poſſibility of our attainments; that if the one be hitherto low and earthly, the other muſt be high and heavenly; bounded by no limits, reſtrained by no meaſures, but improving with our moral improvement, ſtrengthening with our ſpiritual ſtrength?

You do not deny that "the Goſpel is the power of God unto ſalvation," becauſe it is aſſerted by an authority you reſpect. But to whom is it ſuch a power? You reply from your memory, "To all them that believe." But of what uſe is a belief that is obviouſly uninfluential? You are uncon-

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ſciouſly falling into the very error of the fanatic whom you ſo juſtly condemn. Like him, you value yourſelf upon your full aſſent to the truth of Chriſtianity. You go beyond him, for you profeſs to have reaſon as well as faith on your ſide. But is not that an irrational faith which profeſſes to believe, that a principle is productive of ſalvation, and yet to reſt contented while you are not governed by that principle? You bring your reaſon and your will into the ordinary tranſactions of life; the one impels, and the other guides, in almoſt all concerns except that one grand concern, where the impulſe and the guidance are incomparably the moſt important. You allow, indeed, in a general way, that the thoughts and purſuits of religion are the moſt worthy of attention, and then act as if you held no ſuch opinion, made no ſuch avowal.

It is a wonderful inſtance of the union of juſtice and mercy in God, that in the very act of making ſin the marked object of his diſpleaſure, he makes the penitent offender the

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the chosen object of his compassion. But revelation will afford no shelter to those who screen themselves under its promises, while they live in opposition to its laws; to those who desire to retain their vices, without relinquishing their hopes; who take refuge in the very mercy they are abusing; who think they exalt the efficacy of grace, by believing it will cancel, not only all the sins they have committed, but all they intend to commit. The truth is, if they really believe God, it is only when he promises. But shall he not also be believed when he threatens, or shall we desire to abrogate half his word, that while we are violating one part, the other may confirm our security? Is not this subterfuge as much an abdication of common sense, as a contempt of divine justice?

Unhallowed passions too frequently enlist both wit and argument into their service, the one laughs at their excesses, the other reasons them away. Wit is no longer employed in her rightful office, to decorate virtue,

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virtue, but to ridicule her. Reaſon is no longer called in to controul appetite, but to plead for it. Indulgence confirms its dominion. As the empire of ſenſe is fortified, that of reaſon declines. Even God is audaciouſly, though, perhaps, gaily arraigned, for having made corrupt inclinations natural, and then puniſhing their indulgence; as if he had not given reaſon to reſtrain, as if he had not beſtowed religion to controul them.

It is not an uncommon practice to aſſent to the truth of Scripture, and even to approve and recommend it, without *really* believing it; for the teſt of belief is to make it the rule of judging ourſelves, and endeavouring to act as if we expected to be judged by it. The Chriſtian doctrines will always produce Chriſtian affections and diſpoſitions in the mind, in the proportion in which they are underſtood, in the degree in which they are cordially embraced. The temper and conduct of the Chriſtian is a faithful reflection of the doctrines of Chriſtianity; and the improvement of his life is the only evidence

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evidence of his having received its truths into his heart.

Of all the ingredients of which our intellectual and ſpiritual character is compounded, that is the moſt doubtful, the moſt unfixed, and the moſt eaſily ſhaken, which is in reality the baſis of all our other principles, as well as the foundation of all our future hopes — we mean faith. It is the want of this living root which accounts for all the deformities in the mind, all the anomalies in the character of man. Diſguiſe it as we will — and we confine not the charge to the profligate, or even to the negligent — it is practical unbelief which ſo ſadly depreſſes our moral ſtandard.

Yet the negligent in practice are not ſeldom confident in the profeſſion of their faith. As they are not often troubled with any doubt of themſelves, of courſe they inſtitute no very deep enquiry whether they do ſincerely believe the promiſes of Chriſtianity. But, however frivolous *they* may deem the ſcrutiny, it was once thought to be

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be a matter worthy of a ſerious enquiry among Chriſtians, whether their hopes were well-founded. Better men than many who now reckon themſelves good, entertained doubts of their own ſtate, and could not reſt till they came to ſomething like deciſion on this momentous queſtion. Is then that ſober inquiry, which was in them the trueſt mark of prudence, now to be treated as a needleſs ſcrupuloſity, if not as an evidence of an unſound mind? Is that which was to them ſo ſerious a concern as to demand a combination of their beſt faculties and their moſt fervent endeavours, become ſo eaſy as to be comprehended at a glance, and adopted in a moment? Are the difficulties, which coſt them ſo much reflection, prayer, and ſelf-denial, miraculouſly removed, and made ſmooth for you? Are things ſo altered, that while they worked out their ſalvation with fear and trembling, you are ſecure of an eaſy, indolent, almoſt unſolicited ſalvation? Are corrupt human nature and the requiſitions of the Goſpel

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now ſo ſuddenly accommodated to each other? Are ſin and ſafety grown ſo congruous? Is it become ſo natural to fallen creatures to be reconciled to God and goodneſs, without that long and ſerious proceſs which was once thought ſo indiſpenſable to its accompliſhment? Is that ſuperinduced principle which the moſt acute nation in the world accounted "fooliſhneſs," and the moſt perverſe people a "ſtumbling block," become to you ſo eaſy of apprehenſion, ſo acceſſible to your reach, ſo facilitated to your corruptions, ſo certain of attainment, as to ſuperſede the labour of examination, as to be acquired without the trouble of purſuit? If to *you* the end is made ſure, with the utter ignorance of the way, and a general neglect of the means; if *you* find that path clear which they found intricate; if *you* obtain, without ſeeking, that aſſurance, by the bare promiſe of which they were ſupported; if all this be really your happy caſe, it muſt have been achieved by ſome power which has not been before revealed, by ſome miracle

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racle which neither the Old or the New Teſtament has either recorded or predicted.

You would do well then, beſides looking back to the oracles of truth, to enquire of your authorized inſtructors, if there has been any change effected in the requirements of Chriſtianity, any deductions made in its demands, any facilities introduced into its ſcheme, any revelation by which the old impediments have been removed, and a ſhorter cut to heaven cleared out? Conſult ſome real Chriſtians of your acquaintance; enquire if *they*, deſpiſing and forſaking the good old way, found repentance, pardon, holineſs, victory over the world, and acceptance with God, ſo ſlight, ſo rapid, yet ſo certain a thing? Aſk if they became Chriſtians by chance or by inheritance, if they were "renewed in the ſpirit of their minds" by the mere form of baptiſm? Enquire if their entrance into a religious life coſt them no ſacrifice, if their attainments were accidental, if they maintained the ground once gained without effort, if they im-

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improved it without prayer, if they were eſtabliſhed in it without divine aſſiſtance?

The truth is, the perſons in queſtion either do not think the defect of faith a fundamental error, or they ſuppoſe they believe when they do not. When this laſt is the caſe, they reſt ſatisfied in their miſtake; for people do not ſeek to extricate themſelves from a doubt in which they do not feel entangled. It is, however, practical unbelief which quenches the vital flame of virtue.

Unbelief is not, as you are too ready to ſuppoſe, merely one among the many evils of the heart, but it is the root and principle of them all. That faith is the foundation of virtue is implied to have been clearly underſtood by the Apoſtle when he ſpeaks of "*the obedience* of faith."

How hotly do we reſent it, if *our* veracity is ſuſpected! How indignantly do our hearts riſe, if our fellow-creatures do not believe our word on occaſions the moſt trivial! Yet we do not tremble at the idea of not believing

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lieving the word of Omnipotence: yet do his promiſes excite no ardent deſires in our hearts after the bleſſings they reveal. And could this poſſibly be the caſe, if we confidently credited the truth of the promiſes.

If men only ſuſpect there is ſome new road which may lead to fame or fortune, or any deſirable acquiſition, how ſedulous are they in their enquiries after it, how anxious to aſcertain its probability, how zealous to turn the information to their profit! But when *this* grand concern is in queſtion, ſo far from inveſtigating, they take it for granted, they aſſume, not only that the thing is true, but that their intereſt in it is ſafe. It ſcarcely coſts them a thought, they are ſeldom embarraſſed with a doubt. So far from reflecting how the difficulties which lie in the way may be removed, they do not enquire whether they exiſt, much leſs what they are; and with thoſe who would point them out, they evade the ſubject to ſave the trouble. We need look no further for the ſolution of our indifference than that we do

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not earneſtly deſire the promiſed felicity becauſe of our practical incredulity.

If an intelligent Chineſe had been made acquainted with the high privileges and ſublime hopes of a Chriſtian — what advantages he poſſeſſes here, and what proſpects he has in reverſion, not contingent, but certain, provided he turned his advantages to the ſecuring of his proſpects; what promiſes had been made him from an authority he allowed, and by a veracity he truſted; — what a glorious people would he expect to find in a ſociety of ſuch highly privileged beings! Would he not look for cordial obedience to his laws in whoſe will they daily expreſs a complete acquieſcence? — for unbounded love and charity among creatures who periodically confeſſed that their own ſins could not be forgiven, if they forgave not the ſins of others? — for a gratitude, among creatures who recognized one common redemption, which ſhould bear ſome little proportion to his love by whom ſuch an aſtoniſhing redemption had been wrought?

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wrought? Would he not conclude that nothing could be wanting to their happineſs but an entrance on that immortality for which they muſt be ſo well prepared — nothing wanting to their perfection, but the viſible preſence of Him whom they acknowledge to be its ſource and centre? and that in the mean-time they were living the life of ſaints preparatory to their commencing that of angels?

But when, on a perſonal intercourſe, he obſerved that the lives of ſo many beings, the eſſence of whoſe religion was love, were a ſcene of ſtrife and emulation — that this community of Chriſtians which he thought, like the city of Jeruſalem, was at unity with itſelf, had rather be at unity with any thing than with each other — ſplit into parties, and torn aſunder by conflicting intereſts! — when he ſaw that the profeſſors of a religion, founded in humility and ſelf-denial, could be proud without reproach, and voluptuous without diſcredit; when he ſaw, in ſo many other reſpects, the inconceivable diſtance

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between our lives and our pattern, our hopes and our aims, would he not believe the whole had been a misrepresentation? Would he not rejoice, like a true patriot, to find that there was less difference between the inhabitants of Pekin and London than between the professor of Christianity and the Gospel from which he took his rule? Would not this be his natural inference, either that Christianity is not true, or that its avowed disciples do not believe it? When he compared their actual indulgences with their exalted expectancies, would he not believe that their religion was founded on a proclamation for present enjoyment, and not on a promise of future blessedness? In any event, would he conceive that eternal glory was to be obtained without an effort, I had almost said without a wish?

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CHAP. XXI.

Expoſtulation with the inconſiſtent Chriſtian.

THE moſt valuable truths, though known, are uſeleſs, if not applied. Though men were acquainted with the magnetic power of the loadſtone before the Chriſtian era, it remained an object of idle admiration, till within a very few centuries. The practical uſe of the needle being at length found out, its application to its true end gave mankind acceſs to unknown regions, and opened to them a new world. If ſuch were the application of religious knowledge to its proper end, it would, indeed, open to us a world, in which not only one, but every adventurer, might be rewarded, not with diſcovery merely, but with poſſeſſion.

To this unſeen world God has ſhewn us the way by his word, has ſmoothed that way by his grace, has promiſed us the direction

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of his Spirit; has given us free acceſs by his Son, revealing him to us at once, as our propitiation and our pattern. Shall we not, then, thankfully embrace this propitiation, and keep this pattern before our eyes? And though our neareſt approaches will be infinitely diſtant, let us come as near to it as we can, and let us frequently try, by the only true touchſtone, whether we have more receded or approached. If we find our deflection has been greater ſince the laſt examination, let the diſcovery put us upon praying more fervently, watching more vigilantly, and labouring more earneſtly. If we have gained any ground, let us try to ſecure our advantages by puſhing our progreſs. What a low ſtandard, and yet it was a high one in his eſtimation, did he propoſe, who ſaid to his friend, "If thou art not Socrates, yet live as one who would be glad to be Socrates!" To what an elevated pitch were *his* views raiſed, who, diſdaining an inferior model, ſaid, "Be ye like minded with Chriſt!"

Every

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Every degree of goodneſs is only a ray from the central perfections of God. There is no ſhadow of right in any of his creatures but is indicative of his immeaſurable goodneſs. The human virtues had originally a ſtronger reſemblance to, and more intimate correſpondence with, the Being from which they emanated, but by man's apoſtacy, the analogy was not only impaired, but nearly loſt. Yet a ſufficient knowledge of what is good, an ample power of judging, remains to us, to convince us, that religion is a very reaſonable principle, that it is addreſſed to our underſtanding as well as to our affections. God, by the revelation of himſelf and his purpoſes, does not deſtroy, but ſtrengthen, our natural notions of rectitude, our rational ideas of juſtice, our native feelings of truth and equity. The Scripture account of the moral perfections of God, and of the manner in which he will judge the world, is conſonant to thoſe notions which he has implanted in us. Chriſtianity exalts, clears and purifies the light of reaſon, ennobles and elevates the dictates of

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natural conſcience, but does not contradict them — does not ſubvert our ideas of juſtice, nor overturn our innate ſenſe of right and wrong. Our nature, though full of perverſeneſs in the will, is not ſo prepoſterous in her judgment, as to believe that a revelation from God would ever teach a law in direct oppoſition to natural juſtice; that the illumination of the Goſpel was meant to extinguiſh the candle of the Lord ſet up in every human boſom. God would be inconſiſtent with himſelf, if he gave us the light of reaſon, dim indeed, but ſtill a light, and then gave us a revelation, not to clear that dimneſs, not to enlighten that comparative darkneſs, but to oppoſe, eclipſe, extinguiſh it.

To this capacity of judging, to this power of determining, and to your profeſſion of faith, we venture to appeal. We are not arguing with you as with perſons who deny the truth of Chriſtianity, but addreſſing you as avowed believers, who neglect the application of that truth which the infidel denies.

We

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We do not propoſe any diſallowed ſcheme; we do not offer any rejected doctrine, any diſputed opinions; we do not invite your ſubmiſſion to any authority which you do not acknowledge. We ſuggeſt nothing but what your underſtandings aſſent to, nothing but what you profeſs to believe. Yet theſe truths you virtually diſavow, this authority you actually renounce, this creed you practically ſubvert, if they do not furniſh the ground of your conduct. You acknowledge all the verities of the Bible, but your lives are unaltered. Your hearts are impreſſible by all the tender human affections; awake to all "the charities of father, ſon, and brother;"—Why are they untouched, juſt where they ought to be moſt ſenſible, languid where they ſhould be vigorous, dead where they ſhould ſhow moſt vital energy?

There is in this conduct a double incongruity. The perſons in queſtion not only forbear to exhibit in their own lives thoſe admirable effects which Chriſtianity is ſo cālculated to produce, but they do not like

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to ſee them produced to any great extent in others. They are not backward in branding thoſe who exhibit, in their fair proportions, the practical effects of the doctrines they themſelves profeſs to admire, with the ſuſpicion of hypocriſy, or the reproach of extravagance. In the common courſe of affairs, nothing is more cenſured than *inconſiſtency*. In religion it is quite otherwiſe. It is thought criminal to make no religious profeſſion; yet, to act conſiſtently with that profeſſion, to make the practice ſquare with the principle, in ſhort, to live as we believe, expoſes a perſon to be ſuſpected of a deficiency of ſenſe, or of ſincerity; ſubjects him to a doubt, either of the integrity of his heart, or the ſanity of his mind.

Chriſtianity lays down plain rules for the conduct of thoſe who poſſeſs it. The Bible is in the hands of this claſs of profeſſors. But when a portion of it has been careleſsly peruſed, it is conſidered as having done its office. It is laid down, and the reader, inſtead of applying to his conduct the law

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he has been ſtudying, immediately applies to the law of cuſtom, of faſhionable acquaintance, of caprice, of appetite, for that rule which, in converſation he would acknowledge, was only to be found in the book he had been reading. In points of faith, an indefinite aſſent is yielded; he only deſires to be excuſed from the conſequences they involve. He would, indeed, like to cavil at ſome points, but an unexamined approbation coſts leſs trouble: ſo he believes in the groſs, occaſionally, however, indulging a little levity to ſhew his wit, and a few doubts, to ſhew his diſcrimination.

We do not act thus on other occaſions. The arts we learn we turn to the purpoſe for which we learned them. The ſcience we acquire we apply. The ſtudy of geometry is made applicable to practical purpoſes. The knowledge of mechanics is not ſtudied for its own ſake, but for the benefit of thoſe, to whom the application brings ſo many conveniences. The faireſt hand-writing would be of little value, if the uſe did not follow

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the acquiſition. Yet if religion is not only of more allowed importance, but of more univerſal application, than all human knowledge put together, why is it not, like that, brought to bear on the purpoſe for which it was ſent, the rectification of the heart and life? If we acknowledge the Bible to be the only unerring road-book to that land to which we are travelling, why, after conſulting it in the cloſet, do we forget it on the journey, not only neglecting the direction it affords, but purſuing contrary paths of our own deviſing.

It is a ſpectacle to excite the tendereſt commiſeration, when we obſerve the excellent gifts of God to ſome of his moſt favoured creatures — when we ſee the brighteſt natural faculties improved by high cultivation, together with that degree of acquaintance with religion, which not only expels infidelity, but leads to a certain vague adoption of the Chriſtian creed — when we ſee men, not only rich in mental endowments, but poſſeſſed of hearts glowing with

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generoſity and kindneſs — when we ſee ſuch beings as much abſorbed in the purſuits of time and ſenſe, as dead to the higheſt ends of their being, limiting their plans to the preſent life as completely as if they did not believe in that immortality which yet makes part of their ſyſtem! — to ſee them overlooking the excellences which may be attained in this ſtate preparatory to their perfection in a better; — unobſervant of that deep baſis which God has laid in our very nature for the condition of future bleſſedneſs — forgetting how he has not only graciouſly put us in the way to attain it, but has exhorted, but has invited us, only to *conſent*, only to *ſubmit* to be eternally happy! When we hear the Saviour of ſinners condeſcending to expreſs this tender regret at their reluctance, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."—Who can, without ſorrow, contemplate ſuch a diſcrepancy between the practice and the deſtination, the purſuits and the intereſts, the low deſires and

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and the high poſſibilities, the unſpeakable offers and the incorrigible blindneſs?

But in our lapſed humanity, ſenſe, in oppoſition to faith, is too frequently the dictator. If we ſee through a glaſs, and that darkly, it is becauſe the medium is clouded by the breath of ſenſuality. Appetite is the arbitrary power which renders every appeal to reaſon and religion fruitleſs. The pleaſures of the preſent life have matter and ſubſtance, and we act as if thoſe of heaven were dreams and viſions. Self-love errs only in miſtaking its objects, in putting the brief diſcipline which we are called to exerciſe here on a level with eternal ſuffering; it miſtakes, in faſtening itſelf on the lower part of our nature, and forgetting that our ſouls are ourſelves,

But ſurely God did not give his creatures ſuch improveable powers, ſuch ſtrong notices of himſelf, without ſome farther end and deſign than can be perfected in this brief ſtate of being! He never would have given us a nature capable of knowing and

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loving him here, if it were not part of his ſcheme that our knowledge and love of him ſhould be perfected in eternity. We are not the creatures of caſualty. We did not come into this world by chance, or by miſtake; for any uncertain end, or any undetermined purpoſe, but for a purpoſe of which we ſhould never loſe ſight, for an end to which we ſhould have a conſtant reference; that we might bring glory to God now, and be received by his grace to glory everlaſting.

For though all the contributions of all the creatures in exiſtence can add nothing to his inherent glory, yet he has condeſcended to declare that he will be glorified by us. Inſtead of which, what miſhapen ideas do not many form of God! How do they deface the plan of Providence! Were that commodious creed true, that mercy is his excluſive attribute, how ſafely might we ſin on; the profligate would be as ſecure of pardon and acceptance as the penitent, the profane as the pious, the voluptuous as the

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ſelf-denying, the ſceptic as the believer, the lovers of pleaſure as the lovers of God.

Inſtead of endeavouring "to be conformed to the image of God," according to his expreſs command, do not too many thus form a God after their own image, by thinking him ſuch a one as themſelves? Do they not almoſt ſlide into the practice of the Epicureans, who, having made a ſcheme of eaſe, indolence, and indulgence, for their conduct, prudently invented gods accommodated to their own taſte and habits? In them there was conſiſtency. It was making their faith of a piece with their practice, when they made their deities as careleſs, as ſenſual, and as pleaſure-loving as themſelves. But ſurely under a pure diſpenſation, to form a falſe and unworthy eſtimate of the character of the Supreme Governor of the univerſe, is ſcarcely leſs criminal than to deny his exiſtence. Where is the difference between diveſting him of his being, and of his perfections?

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Our Saviour and his Apoſtle, in their claſſification of ſins, frequently bring together ſuch as appear to us to have a wide diſparity. "Emulation" is claſſed with "ſtrife," "variances" with "idolatry," "revelling" with "murder." Thoſe "who mind earthly things" are coupled with thoſe "whoſe end is deſtruction." In enumerating the offences which ſhall make his ſecond coming ſo tremenduouſly awful, Chriſt ranks the being "over-charged with the cares of this life" — cares which we are apt to call prudence and induſtry — with ſins, of which Chriſtian induſtry and prudence would think with abhorrence.

If the apology we make is, that we are governed by example, if we plead the neceſſity of acting as others, eſpecially as our acquaintance act, we intrench ourſelves in excuſes which have no analogy with our conduct on other occaſions. We are never ſo diſintereſted as to think of being ſick, or poor, or miſerable for company. We never generouſly plead the neceſſity of involving ourſelves

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ourſelves in debt, becauſe our friends are ſo involved — of being ruined, becauſe thoſe whom we love are ruined. Shall ſympathy, civility, imitation, and a ſocial ſpirit, then, be pleaded only on occaſion of miſchiefs that are irrevocable, reſerved for errors that are irretrievable, for practices, the conſequences of which will be irremediable?

It is a low degree in the ſcale of goodneſs with which they are contented, who congratulate themſelves that they are not worſe than others, and a death-blow to the noble ambition of piety when they are contented not to be better. If, indeed, they think they are perfectly happy now, they need look no farther. But before they anſwer this important queſtion, are you happy? let them interrogate their own heart. If they aſk it fairly, it will anſwer honeſtly, *I am not happy*. Happineſs is incompatible with the ſtate of their minds, with the nature of their purſuits. The very fondneſs for variety proceeds from an internal ſenſe of indigence. They are ſatiated without being ſatisfied.

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tisfied. The ever-renewed and ever-fruſtrated attempts of the fabled daughters of Danaus, whoſe labour, a Pagan poet tells us, *was infinite, and their puniſhment eternal*, is the diſappointing life and lot of theſe miſtaken votaries to worldly enjoyment. The Prophet annexes to ſomewhat of the ſame diſcouraging purſuit, an awfully explanatory reaſon, when he repreſents the error of thoſe who "hew out broken ciſterns which hold no water," to have originated in their "forſaking the fountain of living waters."

But even the moſt careleſs livers have not loſt the natural ſenſe of the moral quality of actions. They can reaſon upon them. They underſtand the rules they violate. They retain the perception of excellence; they preſerve the feeling of kindneſs; they had rather be the objects of regard than diſlike, if it could be acquired at a cheaper rate, than that of forming their conduct by the principles they approve. *They wiſh they were better*, while they make no effort towards being other than they are. Their very

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very wiſh for amendment is ſo cold, ſo careleſs, and ſo ſlight, that it wants all the characters of repentance, all the energies of reſolution, all the ſincerity of reformation. While we ſometimes hear from theſe perſons, in addition to this wiſh, a general declaration, that *they hope they ſhall mend*, we ſeldom ſee any ſtep taken in conſequence of this profeſſion; on the contrary, they are quieted for the time; they take a ſort of heartleſs comfort in this better taſte; they flatter themſelves it is a proof they love virtue, though they neglect it. But they do not act thus in what truly intereſts them. If there is a ſcheme of amuſement in view, the time is accurately ſettled, the party nicely adjuſted, their punctuality is exact, there is neither delay nor excuſe. It is only on matters of everlaſting intereſt that they beg leave to poſtpone, what they would not be thought to reject. Among all the countleſs generations of frail and fallen humanity, incomparably the moſt numerous community, is the ſect of *Poſtponers*. If, as ſome old

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old divine quaintly obſerves, "hell is paved with good intentions," may we not ſay, that the poſtponers, of which multitudes are found in all ages, and in all churches, are the claſs that has contributed the greateſt number of ſquares to the teſſelated pavement. Is it not an inconſiſtency common to every member of this ſect, to wiſh that the portion of his life which is gone by had been ſpent in virtue, while this wiſh is too feeble to ſtimulate his future days to thoſe purſuits in which he laments the paſt were not ſpent.

You do not act thus inconſiſtently by any neceſſity of nature; depraved as the will is, in common with our other faculties, it does not neceſſarily rob you of the power of determining; it does not take from you the ability of imploring the ſtrength you want. To chuſe the good, and to refuſe the evil, is yet left to your option. Why do the Scriptures make ſuch repeated and ſolemn appeals to the will, if its agency were ſo utterly involuntary? On this will there is no irreſiſtible compulſion. On the ſuppoſition that this

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this were not the caſe, all human laws would be unreaſonable, all courts of judicature not only unjuſt but prepoſterous; all legal executions abſurd as well as inhuman; for would it not be barbarous to puniſh crimes which the perpetrator was not left at liberty to avoid? In this caſe Ravaillac would have been guiltleſs, and Bellingham excuſable.

Nor is it your reaſon which diſſuades you from religion. If you would conſult its ſound and ſober dictates, it would point to religion as naturally as the eye points to the object it would inveſtigate, as the needle to its attracting point. It is not your reaſon but your corruptions which turn away your heart from religion, becauſe it tells you that ſomething is to be done in oppoſition to their ſway, ſomething to be oppoſed contrary to their nature, ſomething to be renounced congenial with their gratification.

It is a fatal miſtake to expect to get rid of an evil by trying to become inſenſible to it. To divert the attention in order to ſtupify the conſcience, is almoſt imitating the

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the malefactor about to be executed, who ſwallows cordials, which, if they allay his terrors, do ſo only by deadening his ſenſibility. Take, then, a diſtinct view of your ſtate, and of your proſpects. Deliberation is valuable, were it only on this ground, that while you are deliberating, there is an intermiſſion of paſſion, there is an interval of appetite: as theſe intermit, better feelings have time to rally, better thoughts to come forward, better principles to ſtruggle for operation.

If with hearts naturally inclined to evil (as what heart is not?), and in a world abounding with temptation, you have ſtrayed widely from the ſtrait path, you are not compelled to purſue it. We need continue in ſin no longer than we love it. Cloſe not then your heart againſt that grace which is offered to all; it will perfect the work it has once begun, if we do not wilfully oppoſe its operations. Let us not therefore lay *all* the blame on our natural conceptions, as if we were compelled to ſink under them.

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They will, indeed, continue to impede our progreſs, but unleſs aided by our inclination, they will not finally obſtruct it. But wilfully to ſin on, and yet expect pardon through the merits of our Redeemer, looks like an impious plot to blind the eyes of Omniſcience, and to tie the hands of Omnipotence. We ſhall always have this infallible criterion by which to judge of our ſtate; we may be aſſured that our ſins are not forgiven, if they are not mortified. We need not pry into our deſtination in the inſcrutable decrees of the Almighty, but in our own rectified affections, our own ſubdued will. Let us never remit our diligence by any perſuaſion of our ſecurity, nor ſlacken our obedience by any fond conceit that our names are written in heaven.

But alas! the ſoul is full of the body, the intellect is ſteeped in ſenſe. The ſpiritual life is immerſed in the animal. Reaſon and appetite, inſtead of keeping their diſtinct natures, are in many inſtances ſo mixed and incorporated, that it is not always eaſy to decom-

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decompose and reduce them to their separate principles. It is want of cordial sincerity which prevents truth from being sought, and where she is not sought, she will not be found. Internal purity of heart, and sanctity of spirit, afford a fairer exhibition of religion, than the most subtle dogmas, and the most zealous debates.

If we seek peace in God, we shall never fail of finding it; if we look for it in the world, it is to look for a clear stream from a polluted source. We have a spirit within us that will occasionally, though unbidden, remind us of our high original, "from what height fallen." How widely have we wandered in search of the good we have lost! We have sought for it in the tumults of ambition, in the pleasures of voluptuousness, in the misleadings of flattery, in our own high imaginations, in the self-gratulations of pride, in the secret indulgence of that vanity, which, probably, it has been one part of our pride not to cure but to conceal. Let us begin to seek for it

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where alone it is to be found, where alone God has promiſed it — in the "way" which he has opened, in the "truth" which he has revealed, and in the "life" which he has quickened.

Do not, then, any longer make religion an incidental item in your ſcheme of life. Do not turn over the conſideration of it to chance; make it a part of your daily plan; take it up as a ſet buſineſs; give it an allotted portion in the diſtribution of your daily concerns, while you admit it as the pervading principle of them all. You carry on no other tranſaction caſually; you do not conduct your profeſſion or manage your eſtate by fits and ſtarts. You do not expect your ſecular buſineſs will go on well without minding it. You ſet about it intently; you tranſact it with a fixed deſign; you conſider it as a definite object. You would not be ſatisfied with it, if it brought you no return, ſtill leſs would you be ſatisfied not to know whether it brought any return or not. Yet you are contented as to this great buſineſs

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buſineſs of life, though you perceive no evidence of its progreſs. You ſee no abſurdity in a religious profeſſion which leaves you as indigent as it found you. Does it not look as if your ſincerity, in the one caſe, did not keep pace with your earneſtneſs in the other; as if your religion was a ſhadow, and your ſecular concerns were the only reality?

Begin then to be diſtinct in your purpoſes, explicit in your deſigns, ſincere in your purſuits. You profeſs to read the Scriptures occaſionally; if the peruſal has hitherto produced no ſenſible effect, this is only an additional motive for making the incidental practice habitual. Do not intermit it under pretence that it has produced no benefit. It is a great thing to keep within the uſe of God's appointed means. If you had not ſome pleaſure in even a caſual peruſal, you would avoid it altogether. The bleſſing which has been ſo long delayed perhaps has not been cordially requeſted; when earneſtly deſired, it will not be finally

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withheld. Light precedes warmth in the daily courſe of nature. Begin then to conſider that knowledge not turned to profit will be a grand article at the final reckoning. How many thouſands have not even made the progreſs which you have made; have not attained that literal acquaintance with the Bible which you have attained. *They* are utterly, perhaps irreclaimably, ignorant. *You* have laid in, at leaſt in your underſtanding, a certain though perhaps ſlender ſtock of materials, on which the divine light only waits to ſhine till you petition for it; that light which, if you will open your eyes to receive it, will ſhine more and more unto the perfect day.

It is not a new ſcheme which is propoſed to you; it is not an imaginary project, an untried device. There is nothing unreaſonable in the hope held out; no elevation in piety but what with the offered aid is attainable; nothing but what thouſands have attained; not merely prophets and ſaints and holy men, but perſons whoſe caſes

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caſes were as unpromiſing as yours; men labouring under the ſame corruptions, diſturbed by the ſame paſſions, aſſailed by the ſame trials, drawn aſide by the ſame temptations, expoſed to the ſame dangerous world; long led aſtray by its cuſtoms, long enſlaved by its maxims. The ſame grace which reſcued them is offered to you. The ſame ſpirit which ſtruggled with their hearts is, perhaps, while you are reading theſe feeble lines, ſtriving with yours. Reſiſt not the impulſe. Complete the aſſimilation. Let not the reſemblance be more imperfect in its fairer features than in its more deformed. Imitate their noble reſolution. Recollect the glorious promiſe made "to him that overcometh." The ſame power which delivered them waits to deliver you. The ten thouſand times ten thouſand who now ſtand before the throne, were not innocent, but penitent — not guiltleſs men, but redeemed ſinners. The ſame God waits to be gracious. The ſame Saviour intercedes. The ſame ſpirit invites. The

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ſame heaven is open. Plead that gracious nature, implore that divine interceſſor, invoke that bleſſed ſpirit. Say not it is too late. Early and late are relative, not poſitive terms. While the door is yet open there is no hour of marked excluſion. So may an inheritance among the ſaints in light ſtill be yours.

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CHAP. XXII.

Reflections of an inconsistent Christian after a serious Perusal of the Bible.

I PROFESS to believe that Christianity is true. Its promises are high; but what have been its profits. It is time to enquire into its truth and its advantages. It never, indeed, pledged itself to confer honours or emoluments; but it engaged to bestow benefits of another kind. If the Christian is deceived in these, he has nothing to console him. Now what am I the better for Christianity? It speaks of changing the heart from darkness to light. What illumination has my mind experienced from it? — But here a doubt begins to arise. Am I indeed a Christian? What claims have I to the character?

Is there any material difference, whether I depend on heaven as a thing of course, to

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thoſe who have been baptized, without a correſponding temper and conduct; or whether I never reflect that there is a heaven, or whether I abſolutely diſbelieve that there is any ſuch place? Is the diſtinction ſo deciſive between ſpeculative unbelief, practical infidelity, and total negligence, as that either of them can afford an aſſurance of eternal happineſs in preference to the other? Yet while the thought of heaven never enters my mind, would I not hotly reſent it as an injury, if any one diſputed my title to it? Should I not treat him who adviſed me to a more ſerious life, as an enemy, and him who ſuſpected I required it, as a calumniator? Is it not, however, worth the inquiry, whether my confidence of obtaining it is well founded; and whether my danger ariſes from my ignorance or my unfitneſs?

If the Scriptures be authentic — if, as I have always profeſſed to believe, they indicate a ſtate of eternal happineſs, together with the means of attaining to it — then

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ſurely not to direct my thoughts to that ſtate, not to apply my attention to thoſe means, is to neglect the ſtate and the things, for which I was ſent into the world. Providence, doubtleſs, intended that every ſpecies of being ſhould reach the perfection for which it was created. Shall his only rational creature be the only one which falls ſhort of the end for which he was made? the only one who refuſes to reach the top of his nature, who refuſes to comply with his original deſtination?

If I were quite certain that I was not created for ſuch a great and noble end as Chriſtianity has revealed, I ſhould then be juſtified in acting as a being would naturally act, who has no higher guide than ſenſe, no nobler ſtimulus than appetite, no larger ſcope than time, no ampler range than this world. And, though I might then regret that my powers and faculties, my capacities and deſires, were formed for ſo low a purpoſe, and their exerciſe limited to ſo brief a ſpace, yet it would not, in that caſe, be acting.

ing inconſiſtently, to turn my fugitive poſſeſſions, and my contracted ſpan, to the beſt account of preſent enjoyment.

But if I have indeed, as I profeſs to have, any faith however low, any hope however feeble, any proſpect however faint, is it rational to act in ſuch open oppoſition to my profeſſion? Is it right or reaſonable, to believe and to neglect, to avow and to diſregard, to profeſs and to oppoſe the ſame thing? Do I raiſe my character for that underſtanding on which I value myſelf, if, while I make confeſſion of a faith which has been adopted by the wiſeſt men in different ages, my temper is not, like theirs, conformed to it, my will is not, like theirs, ſubdued to it, my life is not, like theirs, governed by it.

I think this world more certain than the next, becauſe I have the evidence of my ſenſes to its reality; and becauſe its enjoyments are preſent, viſible, tangible. But the ſame being who gave my ſenſes, gives alſo reaſon and faith; and do not theſe

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afford to the ſincere enquirer other evidence of no leſs power? Even in many natural things, we receive the evidence of reaſon as confidently as the teſtimony of ſenſe. Our reaſon informs us, that the things we ſee could not have been produced without a cauſe which we do not ſee: we might as well ſay they have no being, as that they had no cauſe—and yet the cauſe lies as completely out of our reach as the things of another world. The unſeen things, then, may be as ſatisfactorily proved by other arguments, as the things we know are proved by our ſenſes. But the higheſt evidence of things not ſeen is faith. Even this principle we admit in worldly things, but reject in ſpiritual. We ſhould know very little of this earth, if we knew only what we have ſeen. Now we believe that a multitude of things exiſt which we never ſaw, and which few, comparatively, have ſeen. This is the evidence of faith in the teſtimony of the relater.

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I see persons in the ordinary affairs of life act upon the mere report of authentic information; conduct concerns analogous to those whose success is made known to them by impartial evidence, and act confidently on the relation of credible witnesses; and they would be thought perverse and unreasonable, were not their conduct influenced by such competent testimony. Is it, then, only in the momentous concern of religion, where these appropriate evidences are allowed to be incontestible, where a revelation from heaven, where the attestation of undeniable witnesses, has established the truth in the minds of inquiring men beyond a doubt — Is it only where the testimony is the most unquestionable, and the object the most transcendently important, that neglect is pardonable, that delay is prudent, that indifference is safe?

It is time to arrive at some decision on a question which, if it be any thing, is every thing; which, if it be indeed founded in infallible truth, involves consequences so vast, effects so lasting, that all the other concerns

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of the whole world ſhrink into nothing, when weighed againſt my individual concern in this ſingle buſineſs.

That thinking mind which enables me to frame theſe reflections, that ſentient ſpirit which ſuggeſts theſe apprehenſions, thoſe irrepreſſible feelings which drive out my thoughts, and force my ſpeculations beyond the preſent ſcene, prove, that I have ſomething within me which was made for immortality. If, then, I am once convinced of theſe truths, can I any longer heſitate to devote my beſt thoughts to my higheſt good, my chiefeſt care to my neareſt concern, my moſt intenſe ſolicitude to my everlaſting intereſts?

Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief! Convert my dead faith into an operative principle! Let my ſluggiſh will be quickened, let my reluctant deſires give ſome ſigns of life. Let it be an evidence of the real exiſtence of my faith, that it is not inert.

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We talk of the glory of heaven as coolly, and hear of it with as much indifference, as if it were the unalienable birth-right of every nominal Chriſtian, and that our ſecurity left no room for our ſolicitude. But I now find, on examining it more cloſely, that the Bible ſpeaks of a thing which Chriſtians of my claſs neglect to take into the account; a *fitneſs* for that glory, a ſpirit prepared for that ſtate, which God has prepared for them that love him. It not only promiſes them heaven, but quickens their deſires after it, qualifies them for the enjoyment of it. Now, can I conſcientiouſly declare that I poſſeſs, that I have ever endeavoured to poſſeſs, thoſe deſires, without which heaven is unattainable; thoſe diſpoſitions, without which, if it could be attained, it would not be a place of happineſs? Is it, then, probable, arguing upon merely rational grounds, that God will receive me to his preſence there, if I continue to live without him in the world? Will he accept me when I come to die, alienated

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from him in heart and thought as I have lived?

After all, uncertainty is no comfortable ſtate. It is ſafer to ſeek a ſatisfactory ſolution to my doubts by ſerious enquiry; to ſeek tranquillity to my heart by earneſt prayer. It is better to implore the promiſed aid, to ſtrengthen my vacillating mind, even though I renounce a little preſent eaſe, a little temporary pleaſure. If, indeed, avoiding to think of the evil would remove it, if averting my eyes from the danger would annihilate it, all would be well. But if, on the contrary, fearing it now, may avert it for ever, common ſenſe, reaſonable ſelf-love, mere human prudence, compel me to make the computation of the relative value of time and eternity I may, indeed, as I have frequently done, poſtpone my purpoſe to ſome future time. But then I am not ſo ſkilled in the doctrine of chances as to be quite certain that time may ever arrive. He that intends to reform to-morrow does not repent to day. When delay

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is danger, is it not foolish to delay? Where it may be destruction, is it not something worse than folly? I will arise, and go to my Father, &c. &c. &c.

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CHAP. XXIII.

The Chriſtian in the World.

"THE only doctrinal truth," ſays Biſhop Sanderſon, "which Solomon inſiſted on, when he took the whole world for his large but barren text, was, that all is vanity." This was not the verdict of a hermit railing from his cell at pleaſures untaſted, or at grandeur unenjoyed. Among the ſons of men, not one had ſought with more unremitted diligence, or had wider avenues to the ſearch, for whatever good either ſkill or power could extract out of the world, than Solomon. No one could judge of the ſweets which can be drawn from this grand Alembic, with higher natural abilities, or with deeper experimental wiſdom. He did not deſcant on the vanity of the world ſo eloquently till he had conſidered it accurately, and examined it practically. He was not

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not contented, like a learned theoriſt, to collect his notions from philoſophy or hiſtory, or hearſay; he well knew what he ſaid, "and whereof he affirmed." All upon which he ſo pathetically preached he had ſeen with his eyes, heard with his ears, and, in his widely-roving ſearch, had experienced in his own diſappointed mind, and felt in his own aching heart. He goes on to prove, by an induction of particulars, the grand truth propounded in his theſis, the *vanity of the world*. He ſhews, in a regular ſeries of experiments, how he had ranſacked its treaſures, exhauſted its enjoyments, and, even to ſatiety, revelled in its honours, riches, and delights. He had been an intellectual as well as ſenſual voluptuary, and had emptied the reſources of knowledge as well as of pleaſure.—Then reverting in the cloſe of his diſcourſe to the point from which he had ſet out, he again pronounces, that all is vanity.

"The concluſion of the whole matter" which he draws from this melancholy argument,

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ment, as finely exhibited as penſively conceived, is a ſolemn injunction to others to remember, what it is to be feared the Preacher himſelf had ſometimes forgotten, that the whole duty of man is to fear God, and keep his commandments; winding up his fine peroration with a motive in which every child of Adam is equally, is awfully concerned, "*becauſe* God ſhall bring every work into judgment."

May not every real Chriſtian, while his heart is touched with the affecting truth of the text, be admoniſhed by this ſolemn valedictory declaration? May he not learn the leſſon inculcated at leſs expence than it was acquired by this great practical maſter of the ſcience of wiſdom? If another ſovereign was told there was no royal way to geometry, the King of Iſrael has opened a royal way to a more divine philoſophy. By the benefit to be derived from contemplating this illuſtrious inſtance of "how little are the great," the Chriſtian may ſet out where Solomon ended. He may be convinced

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vinced of the vanity of the world at a price far cheaper than Solomon paid for it, by a way far safer than his own experience. He may convert the experiment made by the royal Preacher to his own personal account. He may find in the doctrines of the Gospel a confirmation of its truth, in its precepts a counteraction to its perils, in its promises a consolation for its disappointments.

In this world, such as Solomon has vividly painted it, the Christian is to live — is to live, through divine assistance, untainted by its maxims, uncontaminated by its practices. Man, being obviously designed by his Creator for social life, and society being evidently his proper place and condition, it seems to be his duty, not so much to consider what degree of possible perfection he might have attained in that state of seclusion to which he was never destined, as how he may usefully fill his allotted sphere in the world for which he was made; how he may conscientiously discharge the duties to which he is plainly called by providential ordination.

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tion. To think how he may acquit himself well in his actual state and condition, is clearly more profitable, than to waste his time and spirits, in devising the best speculative scheme of life, to the adoption of which there is little probability of his ever being appointed.

We were not sent into this world with orders to make ourselves miserable, but with abilities, and directions, and helps, to search out the best possibilities of happiness which remain to beings, fallen from that state of moral and mental rectitude in which man was created; to make the best of the ruins of that perfect world whose beauty he had marred, and whose capacity of conferring felicity he had fatally impaired. Human life, therefore, abounding as it does in blessings and mercies, is not the blissful vision which youthful fancy images, or poetry feigns, or romance exhibits. It is in a considerable measure compounded of painful and of dull realities, and not a splendid tissue of grand events or brilliant exploits; it is to some an

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an almoſt unvaried ſtate of penury, to many a ſeries of cares and troubles, to all, a ſtate of probation. But the primeval puniſhment, the ſentence of labour, like the other inflictions of Him who in judgment remembers mercy, is transformed into a bleſſing. And, whether we conſider the manual induſtry of the poor, or the intellectual exertions of the ſuperior claſſes, we ſhall find that diligent occupation, if not criminally perverted from its end, is at once the inſtrument of virtue and the ſecret of happineſs. Man cannot be ſafely truſted with a life of leiſure.

As the character about to be briefly conſidered is preſumed to be a real Chriſtian, it would be ſuperfluous, for two reaſons, to inſiſt that his vocation in the world muſt be lawful. It is not to be ſuppoſed that a religious man will ever engage in an employment that is illicit; and it is almoſt equally beyond ſuppoſition, that perſons who are actually ſo engaged, will caſt their eyes on a book whoſe tendency is ſerious.

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But the moſt unexceptionable profeſſion is not exempt from dangers. It requires ſtrict watchfulneſs, not only to conduct the moſt uſeful undertaking in a right ſpirit, and with a conſtant eye to Him, to whom every intelligent being is accountable; it requires not only conſtant vigilance againſt the allurements of avarice, and the baits of ambition, but it requires caution againſt the unſuſpected miſchiefs of embarking ſo widely, or plunging ſo deeply in any temporal concern, as almoſt neceſſarily to deteriorate the character. He embarks too widely, and plunges too deeply, however honourable be the undertaking, if it abſorb the whole man — if it ſo crowd his mind with interfering ſchemes and complicated projects, as to leave no time and no thought, and gradually no inclination, for that reference which ſhould be the ultimate end of all human deſigns.

It can never be too often repeated, however writers tire with ſaying, and readers with hearing it, that it is ſcarcely more neceſſary to addreſs ſerious ſuggeſtions to men ſunk

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ſunk in groſs purſuits, than to that large, and important, and valuable claſs, whoſe danger lies in the very credit, and dignity, and uſefulneſs of their engagements. A thouſand diſſertations have been written, and yet the theme is not exhauſted, on that hackneyed but neglected truth, that *we are undone by lawful things*, by exceſs in things right in themſelves, and which only become wrong by being inordinately purſued — purſued to the neglect of things more eſſential; when what is even laudable is excluſively ſought, to the forgetfulneſs of what is indiſpenſible. Things may not only be comparatively, but poſitively, good, and yet not be "things which accompany ſalvation." They may not only be intended to be inſtrumental, but actually be ſo, both in advancing the proſperity, and in reſtraining the diſorders of this world, and ſo far be highly valuable, and yet the act may be ſubſtituted for that principle which ſhould be its inſpiring motive. The fault, however, is not in the thing, but in the mind, when uſeful actions

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are not done with a reference to the higheſt end. Of this reference a Chriſtian will aim never to loſe ſight. He will, before he engage in the concerns of the day, prepare his mind by fervent devotion; not only imploring direction in the common courſe of action, and the expected occurrences of the day, but ſtrength to meet thoſe unknown occaſions and unſuſpected events, which, in human life, and eſpecially in a life of buſineſs, ſo frequently occur. Without this panoply, he will not venture to engage with the world; but the armour which he put on in ſolitude, he will not lay aſide in the field of battle: it was for that warfare he had buckled it on.

As the lawyer has his compendium of caſes and precedents, the legiſlator his ſtatutes, the ſoldier his book of tactics, and every other profeſſor his *vade mecum* to conſult in difficulties, the Chriſtian, to whichever of the profeſſions he may belong, will take his morning-lecture from a more infallible directory, comprehending not only caſes and precedents, but abounding alſo

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with thoſe ſeminal principles which contain the eſſence of all actual duty, from which all practical excellence is deducible. This ſpirit of laws differs from all other legal inſtitutes, ſome of which, from that imperfection inſeparable from the beſt human things, have been found unintelligible, ſome impracticable, and ſome have become obſolete. The divine law is ſubject to no ſuch diſadvantages. It is perfect in its nature, intelligible in its conſtruction, and eternal in its obligation.

This ſacred inſtitute he will conſult, not occaſionally, but daily. Unreminded of general duty, unfurniſhed with ſome leading hint for the particular demand, he will not venture to ruſh into the buſtle, trial, and temptation of the day. Of this aid he will poſſeſs himſelf with more eaſe, and leſs loſs of time, as he will not have to ranſack a multiplicity of folios for a detached caſe, or an individual intricacy; for, though he may not find in the Bible ſpecific inſtances, yet he will diſcover in every page ſome governing truth, ſome rule of univerſal application, the

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the ſpirit of which may be brought to bear on almoſt every circumſtance; ſome principle ſuited to every purpoſe, and competent to the ſolution of every moral difficulty. Scripture does not, indeed, pretend to include technical or profeſſional peculiarities, but it exhibits the temper and the conduct which may be made applicable to the ſpecial concerns of every man, whatever be his occupation. He will find in it the right direction to the right purſuit, the ſtraight road to the proper end; the duty of a pure intention; and the prohibition of falſe meaſures to attain even a laudable object. No hurry or engagement will ever make him loſe ſight of that ſacred aphoriſm ſo pointedly addreſſed to men of buſineſs, "He that maketh haſte to be rich ſhall hardly be innocent." The cautionary texts he admired in his cloſet, he will not treaſure up as claſſical mottos to amuſe his fancy, or embelliſh his diſcourſe, but will adopt as rules of conduct, and bring them into every worldly tranſaction, whether commercial, forenſic, medical, military,

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or whatever elſe be his profeſſed object. He will not adjuſt his ſcale of duty by the falſe ſtandard of the world, nor by any meaſure of his own deviſing; he has but one ſtandard of judging, but one meaſure of conduct—the infallible word of God. This rule he will take as he finds it, he will uſe as he is commanded; he will not bend it to his own convenience, he will not accommodate it to his own views, his own paſſions, his own emolument, his own reputation.

Here it may be aſked, Why is not Scripture more explicit in direction, more minute in detail? We find our ſelf-love perpetually furniſhing ſubterfuges for evading duties, and multiplying exceptions to rules. God, who knows all hearts, and foreſaw their captiouſneſs, might, it may be ſaid, have guarded againſt it by more enlarged inſtructions. The Holy Spirit, however, did not ſee fit to deſcend to ſuch minutiæ, but, having given the principle, left man to the exerciſe of his reaſon, in the application of the general law to his particular caſe; for

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for if he is left to the uſe of his judgment, it is not that he may pervert truth, but apply it. His underſtanding and rectitude are perpetually called into joint exerciſe, for that which is immediately the duty of one man, another may not be called to perform.

Not to diſtreſs the mind, therefore, with unneceſſary ſcruples, nor to perplex it by a multiplicity of circumſtances, ſome things are left indefinite. An incumbered body of inſtitutes would have been too vaſt and complicated for general uſe; that time would be taken up in ſelecting them, which is better employed in acting upon them. Even were every particular of every duty, in all its bearings, circumſtantially ramified, it would not ſo much direct the conduct, as furniſh new pretences for neglecting it. Then, as now, it would be ſeen rather that the will is perverſe, than the underſtanding unſatisfied. More amplification would not have leſſened objections. Thoſe who complain now, that the rule is not explicit, would complain then, that it was tedious. A fuller

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expoſition would neither have cleared doubts nor prevented diſputes. It would then have been charged with redundancy, as it is now with defectiveneſs.

If the world carries contamination to the heart, it carries alſo to the right-minded a preſervative; as the viper's blood is ſaid to be an antidote for its bite. The living world is to ſuch perſons an improving exemplification of the moral leſſons of hiſtory. If we apply to our own improvement the recorded excellences or errors of which we read; if we are ſtruck with the ſucceſſes or defeats of ambition; the purſuits or diſappointments of vanity; the ſordid accumulations of avarice, or the waſting ravages of prodigality; if we are moved with inſtances of vice and virtue in men of whom we know nothing but what the hiſtorian is pleaſed to tell us, and of whom he perhaps knew not much more; if we read with intereſt of the violence of parties, of which both the leaders and the followers have been long laid in the duſt; if we are affected, as every intelligent mind cannot but be affected, with theſe pictures

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pictures of things, how much benefit may a well-directed mind derive from seeing them realized; from seeing the old scenes acted over again by living performers; from living himself among the *dramatis personæ* as one of the actors; from taking a personal interest in a repetition of what he condemned or applauded when only coldly presented to his understanding, and at which his principles revolted or rejoiced, even in the dead letter of narrative. He now sees the same sentiments embodied, the same passions brought into action, similar opinions operating upon actual conduct.

If he is deeply touched when history presents to his view the errors of high and heroic minds, when it exhibits the aberrations of superior genius, how much more lively will be his regret, when he sees, among his own acquaintance, the ardour of a noble and ingenuous mind exclusively consumed on objects, which might indeed be accounted great, if this world were all, but which never gives any practical intimation that there

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is another. But how much more pungent will be his ſorrow, when he obſerves lofty and ſagacious ſpirits neglecting to make the moſt even of this brief ſtate of being; — when he ſees men who might have made the world a better thing than they found it, had they employed their ſuperior powers of intellect in ſtudying how they might pleaſe God, by promoting the beſt intereſts of his creatures; when he ſees ſuch underſtandings clouded by intemperance, ſuch minds abſorbed in ſtudying the qualities of a race-horſe, or calculating the chances of a gaming-table!

In another, and a more eſtimable claſs of characters, he is ſtruck with admiration and concern, in obſerving what good and reſembling imitations of religion are made by honour, ſenſe, and ſpirit; how reſpectably moral honeſty, kindneſs, and generoſity may, to ſuperficial obſervers, perſonate Chriſtianity, may even execute the act of piety with an utter deſtitution of the principle. He ſees in certain minds ſome maſterly ſtrokes

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ſtrokes of natural beauty, which at once dignify and embelliſh them, ſo as, on ſome occaſions, to tempt him to forget that they are not religious. But theſe brilliant qualities are not infuſed into the entire character, the excellence is limited to a few ſhining points, and the hollows are proportioned to the heights. Rich in ſome ſplendid virtues, there is no uniformity in the principle; there is perhaps ſome allowed ſin in the practice: while in the character of the real Chriſtian, though there may be much infirmity, there is a deſire of conſiſtency — there is no deliberate tranſgreſſion — there is even no unrepented error.

Theſe living leſſons the pious obſerver will turn to account. The impreſſion thus made on his heart, from actual obſervation, will ſink deeper, and be more durable, than the inſtruction to be obtained by a mere intellectual view of mankind, from information collected from writers, who are obliged to pick up facts, not from having witneſſed them, but as they find them in pre-

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ceding writers; men who know little of the cauſes of which they deſcribe the effects, or the motives of the actions they record. Hiſtory paints men, acute obſervation anatomizes them.

If he regret that his neceſſary duties in the world trench on the time he would gladly devote to religious purſuits, let him take comfort that theſe regrets, if ſincere, are an earneſt of his ſafety. The very corruptions to which he is witneſs, will experimentally convince him of the truth of a doctrine, which is no where more completely learned than in the buſtle of life. The perception of this evil in others, makes him watch againſt ſimilar tendencies within; tendencies which only the grace daily invoked by him prevents from breaking out into action. This deep conviction of man's corruption, inſtead of impairing his benevolence, will improve it. It will teach him not to expect too much from ſo imperfect a being, as well as to bear with the errors which his belief of the doc-

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trine has led him to expect. This, together with his intercourſe with the world, will cure him of that miſtake ſo common to perſons who have not lived in it, that of expecting no faults in thoſe which a fond imagination, on a firſt acquaintance, had led them to believe perfect, and who, on the inevitable diſcovery, become too ſtrongly diſguſted with errors and imperfections, on which they ought to have reckoned. He will never uſe his full conviction of the truth of which we have been ſpeaking to the purpoſe of unworthy diſtruſt, or baſe ſuſpicion. On the contrary, though he will exerciſe his diſcernment in the knowledge of men, and his diſcretion as to the confidence to be placed in them, he will not be ever on the look out to detect, much leſs to expoſe their errors. Though he "loves not the world" in the Scripture ſenſe of the term, he loves the individuals of whom it is compoſed, with the affection of ſympathy. He will put a large and liberal conſtruction on their actions, but he will not ſtretch that

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latitude to the vindication of any thing that is corrupt in principle, or criminal in conduct. Nor will he be always on the defenſive in his intercourſe with them; he will not act with the narrow ſelfiſhneſs of the ſordid trader, who is jealous of every man with whom he has buſineſs to tranſact, on no higher ground than leſt he ſhould loſe money by him; while he tolerates in his character every vice which will not interfere with his pecuniary tranſactions.

It is his aim to reconcile that charity which believeth all things, with that diſcrimination of character which ſhews us, not only ſo many who are bad, but ſo much imperfection, we may ſay, ſo much evil, in the comparatively good. To love and ſerve thoſe in whom we at the ſame time perceive no little moral defect, is turning our ſpiritual diſcernment to a practical account. This principle, while it ſerves to preſerve us from an undue admiration of others, will teach us to ſuſpect theſe, or other defects, in ourſelves.

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The Chriſtian in the world, anxious to improve his ſcanty leiſure, will reſcue from mere diverſion thoſe hours which cannot prudently be ſubtracted from buſineſs. To a man thus circumſtanced, the Sunday is felt to be indeed a bleſſing; to him it is emphatically "a delight." Inſtead of appropriating it as a day of premeditated conviviality, he converts it into a ſtated ſeaſon of enjoyment of another kind. He hardly needs the injunction to "remember" to keep it holy, though he is not unmindful, that, of the ten commandments, it is the only one prefaced with that admonition. He conſiders the obſervance as almoſt more his privilege than his duty. The expectation of its return cheers him under the perplexities of the week. He anticipates it as a reſt here, and as a foretaſte of eternal reſt. He enlarges his pious exerciſes with the more ſatisfaction, as he is clearly aſſured that he is not on this day in danger of trenching on his profeſſional duties; and, from this reflection, his heart more warmly expands in gratitude

gratitude to Him whose day it more immediately is. He feels that, if it were barely a season ordained by some public act, a royal proclamation enjoining it as a necessary interval between the labours which close one week, and those which begin another, a contrivance of ease, a measure of political prudence or personal tenderness to prevent the bodily machine and the overlaboured mind from wearing out, he would be grateful for its institution; but to him the day comes fraught with benefits and blessings of a still higher kind. It is an appointment of God; *that* entitles it to his reverence; it is an institution of spiritual mercy; it is the stated season for recruiting his mental vigour; for inspecting his accounts with his Maker; for taking a more exact survey of the state of his heart; for examining into his faults; for enumerating his mercies; for laying in, by prayer, fresh stores of faith and holiness; for repairing what both may have lost in the turmoil of the week. His heated passions have leisure to cool; his hurried mind to regain

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regain its tranquil tone; his whole internal ſtate to be regulated; his miſtakes to be reviewed; his temper to be new ſet; his piety to be braced up to the pitch from which it may have been ſunk in the atmoſphere he had been breathing. The pious man of buſineſs reliſhes his family ſociety and fireſide enjoyments with a keenneſs not always felt by others. If "the harp and the tabret, and the viol," are not always heard in his feaſts, he does what thoſe who liſten to them do not always remember to do, for "he conſiders the works of the Lord, and regards the operations of his hands." It is not enough for the devoted Chriſtian that his life is dedicated to him who gave it, his ſpirit is, as it were, exhaled in his ſervice *.

* It is to be regretted, that the members of a learned and honourable profeſſion, and which has produced ſo many exemplary characters, ſhould appoint their conſultations on Sundays. It is urged in excuſe, that they cannot claſh with any public courts or ſittings on that day The leading men, by this cuſtom, force ſome of thoſe whoſe practice is leſs eſtabliſhed

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eſtabliſhed into a breach of their duty, againſt which their conſciences perhaps revolt. Might not one of theſe two ſacrifices obviate the neceſſity which is pleaded in its vindication? Might they not either reject ſuch a ſuperfluity of buſineſs as induces it — or, if that be too much to expect, might they not ſubtract the time from their ſocial and convivial hours?

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CHAP. XXIV.

Difficulties and Advantages of the Chriſtian in the World.

THERE are two things of which a wiſe man will be ſcrupulouſly careful, his conſcience and his credit. Happily they are almoſt inſeparable concomitants; they are commonly kept or loſt together; the ſame things which wound the one, uſually giving a blow to the other: yet, it muſt be confeſſed, that conſcience and a mere worldly credit are not, in all inſtances, allowed to ſubſiſt together. God and our hearts — we ſpeak of hearts which are looked into and examined — always condemn us for the ſame things, things, perhaps, for which we do not ſuffer in the opinion of the world: the world, in return, not ſeldom condemns us for actions, for which we have the approbation of God and our conſciences. Is it right to put the verdict of ſuch oppoſite judges

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judges on an equality, nay to abide by that which will be leſs than nothing when *his* ſentence, whoſe favour is eternal life, ſhall be finally pronounced?

Between a wounded conſcience and a wounded credit there is the ſame difference as between a crime and a calamity. Of two inevitable evils, religion inſtructs us to ſubmit to that which is inferior and involuntary. As much as reputation exceeds every worldly good, ſo much, and far more, is conſcience to be conſulted before credit — if credit that can be called, which is derived from the acclamations of a mob, whether compoſed of "the great vulgar or the ſmall."

Yet are we not perpetually ſeeing, that, to ſecure this worthleſs fame, peace and conſcience are ſacrificed? For to what but a miſerably falſe eſtimate of the relative value of theſe two bleſſings; what but the preference of character to duty — in ſupport, too, of a rotten part of it — is it, that the wretched ſyſtem of duelling not only maintains its ground, but is increaſing with a frightful

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frighful rapidity? If we have, perhaps, never heard of a truly religious man engaged in a duel*, it is not that, with all his caution, he is not liable to provocations and inſults, as well as other men; nor that he has no quick ſenſe of injuries, no ſpirit to repel attacks, and no courage to defend himſelf. He who bears inſults is made of like paſſions with him who revenges them; his pride longs to break out if it dared; for even a good man, as the Prelate quoted in the laſt chapter obſerves, "has more to do with this one viper, than with all other his corruptions."

But, among other cauſes, his ſafety lies in this, that he has always endeavoured to

* Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the firſt of our deiſtical writers, and the laſt hero of our ancient chivalry, with that fantaſtic combination of devotion and gallantry which characterized the profeſſion of knighthood, tells us, in the Memoirs of his own Life, that he ſtrictly maintained the religious obſervance of the Sabbath, except when called out to fight a duel for a point of honour, which he ſeemed to have thought a paramount duty.

keep

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keep clear of thoſe initiatory offences which lead to this cataſtrophe; it is becauſe he has been habitually governed by principles of a directly contrary tendency, and has not the leſſon of forbearance to learn, when he is called upon to practice it: becauſe he has not indulged himſelf in thoſe habits, and as little as may be in thoſe ſocieties which lay a man open to the conſequences of which ungoverned appetites are the ſource; becauſe he has always conſidered pride and paſſion as the poſſible ſeeds of murder; an impure glance as the firſt approach to that crime which is the ordinary ſource of duelling — the combined violation of theſe two commandments, being as cloſely connected in practice, as is their poſition in the Decalogue. It is obſervable, that while the ſhifts and ſtratagems to which a man is commonly driven by illicit connections, ſo often lead to duelling, yet that the charge of that crime itſelf, or of any other equally atrocious, far more rarely provokes a challenge, than the charge of the lie, to which the crime

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crime has compelled him to reſort. Can there be a more ſtriking inſtance of the falſe eſtimate of character and virtue, than that the offence is not made to conſiſt in the falſehood itſelf, but in the accuſation of it.

The man of mere worldly principles keeps himſelf in the broad way, which, ſhould events occur, and temptations ariſe to irritate him, may at any time lead to ſuch a termination. His habits of life, his choice of aſſociates, his ſyſtematic reſolution to revenge every inſult, makes his common path a path of danger. His pride is always ready primed; he carries the inflammable matter in his habit, and the firſt ſpark may cauſe an exploſion; while the man of principle, in addition to all the other guards before enumerated, wants, indeed, but this ſingle conſideration to deter him from the ſpirit of duelling; that it is the act of all others which ſtands in the moſt determined oppoſition to the law of God, and the ſpirit of the Goſpel; that it is a ſtudied, deliberate, premeditated ſubverſion of one of the moſt

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moſt imperious duties of Chriſtianity, by making it infamous to forgive injuries.

And even if a man be more correct in his habits, ſtill if the maxims of the world, and not thoſe of Chriſtianity, govern him, he loſes ſight of the great principles which would reſtrain exceſſes in temper, as well as in conduct. He firſt loſes ſight of theſe, perhaps by negligence in private devotion, poſſibly by a careleſs attendance on public worſhip. Thus freeing himſelf from theſe obſervances, he loſes ſight of the obligations of religion, and loſing this ſtrongeſt "muzzle of reſtraint," it is the leſs wonder that a ſmall provocation tempts him to offer bloody ſacrifices to that fantaſtic, but cruel idol, worldly honour. It is the leſs wonder that a neglected, even where there is not a perverted principle, ſhould end in the murder of his friend, and the deſtruction of his own ſoul; for of a merely convivial friendſhip, a duel is no very uncommon termination.

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But to return. — In the ordinary purſuits of life, the good man differs but little from others, in the keenneſs with which he embarks in an enterprize, or in the diligence with which he proſecutes it; but he carries it on in another ſpirit; he is not leſs ſolicitous in the purſuit, but there is leſs perturbation in his ſolicitude; he makes no undue ſacrifices to attain his object. He ſeeks the divine bleſſing, not that he may ſlacken his own exertions, but that he may be directed in them, ſupported under them. Sanguine, perhaps, by nature, he yet takes into the account the probabilities of diſappointment: this when it occurs, he bears as one, who, though careful of the motive and mode of his conduct, had put the affair into the hands of the Maſter of events. His failure does not diſcourage him from freſh exertions, when occaſions equally right preſent themſelves. He is grateful for ſucceſs, but not intoxicated by it. Under defeat he is reſigned, but not deſponding. He meaſures the intrinſic value of an object by aſking his own

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own mind, though he thinks ſo highly of its importance now, what he ſhall probably think of it when his ardour is cooled, and eſpecially, what he ſhall think of it, when all things ſhall be brought into judgment. This queſtion ſettled, either moderates or augments the intereſt he takes in it.

Knowing that whatever he propoſes in the way of public good, is liable to be ſuſpected of imprudence or miſtaken zeal, he turns this expoſure to ſuſpicion to his own advantage. It leads him to examine his project more accurately, to ſpy out its weak ſide, if it have any; and to anticipate, by the operation of a well-exerciſed judgment, the objections which his opponents are likely to make. Foreſeeing the points which may create oppoſition, he guards againſt it, either by altering his plan, if defective, or preparing to defend it, if ſound. One of his great difficulties, and yet it is his only ſecurity, will be his cuſtom of referring all matters in debate, "to the law and to the teſtimony." This will lead him conſtantly to oppoſe principle

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ciple to expediency. Of this incommodious integrity, he muſt abide the cenſure and the conſequences. He will have no ſhare in the crooked arts and intrigues by which ſome men riſe ſo faſt, and become ſo popular. He will deteſt craft almoſt as much as fraud, and the pitiful ſhifts of a narrow policy, as much as he will love the light and open path of truth and honeſty. But he does not ſlacken in his undeviating ſtrictneſs, though he is aware, that this is the quality which peculiarly expoſes him to miſrepreſentation. Exertion, ſtruggle, conflict, theſe are the trials for which he prepares himſelf. Thankful for tranquillity when it can be honeſtly obtained, enjoying repoſe when he has fairly earned it; he yet knows that this is not the world in which they are to be looked for with any certainty, or enjoyed with any continuance; and this conviction of its inſtability and fluctuation is one of the many arguments with which he ſeeks to arm himſelf againſt the fear of death.

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The unequal diſtribution of the good things of this life, the inferior ſucceſs of men of more virtue, higher talent, and a better outſet, than others of his acquaintance, whoſe beginning was low, and whoſe deſerts equivocal, remind him that proſperity is no ſure teſt of merit, and that the favour of heaven is not to be eſtimated by ſucceſs. God, he recollects, has made no ſpecial promiſe of proſperity to his children. When given, it is to be eſteemed no certain mark of his approbation; when withdrawn, it is often in mercy; when withheld, it is becauſe God has higher deſigns for his leſs proſperous ſervants. As to himſelf, the events of every day teach him, that he had expected more from human life than it had to beſtow, and that his diſappointments ariſe not leſs from his own ſanguine temper than from the deceits of that world which it had overrated.

The world, eſpecially we may here remark, the commercial world, particularly in theſe awful times, is calculated to teach forbear-

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forbearance, far more than ſequeſtered life, becauſe men often ſuffer ſo ſeverely in their fortune and credit by the errors or misfortunes of others. If the good man ſuffer by his own fault, he will find a freſh motive for humility; if by the fault of another, for patience; if more directly from the hand of God, for ſubmiſſion. Whatever be the fluctuations of his fortune, his faith will gain ſtability, for he will diſcern an inviſible hand directing all events for his ultimate good. If he is placed in a ſtate of peculiar agitation, God intends to lead him by it to ſeek his reſt where only it can be found. If in a ſtate of ſingular difficulty, it is to ſhew him his own weakneſs, and his immediate dependance on him, who gives ſtrength to the weak. This principle admitted, will furniſh new motives to watchfulneſs and prayer, without any diminution of activity or ſpirit.

His obſervations on the gradual proceſs, by which the love of money monopolizes the hearts of others, teach him to guard

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his own against its encroachments. He sees that the first designs of men are commonly moderate. Few take in at one view all the length they go afterwards. They look not beyond a certain eminence. On this they fix as the summit of their desires. But what appeared high at a distance sinks when approached; is nothing when attained; — "Alps rise on Alps;" — a further distance presents a further height; this, they are sure, will bound their desires: this attained, they are resolved to retire and dedicate their lives and their riches to the end for which, they persuade themselves, they have been toiling. But, with the acquisition, the desire increases; wants grow out of riches. The moderate man is become insatiable. The principle thrives with the attainment of its object. Though hope is exchanged for possession, yet the restless principle continues to work, and will work on, unless a higher principle, by which he is every day less likely and less desirous to be governed, should arise to check it.

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Society being compoſed of intelligent human beings, the wiſe man knows that ſomething may be generally learned from it, relative to the human character; that ſome benefit may be reaped, even if little poſitive good appear in it; and more does ſometimes appear, than we are willing to put to profit. Leſſons may be extracted from the very faults of men; from the vehemence of their paſſions, the miſtakes of their judgment, the blindneſs of their prejudice.

The Holy Scriptures frequently make the anxious diligence of men, in the purſuit of worldly advantages, a leſſon which a better man would do well to improve upon in his higher purſuits. He may find in *their* induſtry a ſtandard, though not a model: the wiſdom he learns from this generation, he will convert to the purpoſes of the children of light. The world's wiſe man is ever on the watch for advancing his projects. If he contract an acquaintance of importance, his firſt thought is, how he may make the moſt of him: the Chriſtian is equally careful to

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turn the acquiſition of a pious friend to his own account, but with a higher view.

The mind, on the watch for improvement, will improve by the very errors of others. Virtue, our divine Maſter has taught us, may take ſome profitable leſſons from vice. The activity of the fraudful ſteward may ſtimulate the negligent Chriſtian. From the perſeverance of the malignant in their patient proſecution of revenge, he may learn fortitude under diſcouragements, and reſolution under difficulties. Injuries may teach him the value of juſtice; may ſet him upon inveſtigating its principle, and guarding againſt its violation. The wileneſs of the deſigning may keep his underſtanding on the alert, and confirm the prudence it has excited. Temptations from without ſtrengthen his powers of reſiſtance; his own faults ſhew him his own weakneſs, as it is foreign aggreſſion which forms heroes, and domeſtic oppoſition which makes ſtateſmen.

His thirſt for human applauſe will be abated, when he obſerves in thoſe around him,

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him, the unexpected attainment of popularity so soon followed by its unmerited loss. When he beholds the rapid transfer of power, it will, more than whole tomes of philosophy, shew him that "favour is deceitful." He will moderate his desires of great riches, when he sees by what sacrifices they are sometimes obtained, and to what temptations the possession leads. He will be less likely to repine that others are reaching the summit of ambition, whether they achieve it by talents which he does not possess, or attain it by steps which he would not chuse to climb, or maintain it by concessions which he would not care to make. The pangs of party with which he sees some of his friends convulsed, and the turbulent anxiety with which they watch the prognostics of its rise and fall, keep him sober without making him indifferent. He preserves his temper with his attachments, and his integrity with his preferences, because he is habitually watching how he may serve the state, and

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not how, by increaſing her perplexities, he may advance himſelf.

The uſe he thus makes of the world will not carry him to the length of entangling himſelf in its ſnares. Though he maintains a neceſſary intercourſe with men of oppoſite character, he will not puſh that intercourſe further than occaſion requires. He will tranſact buſineſs with them with frankneſs and civility, but he will not follow them to any objectionable lengths. He is aware, that though a wiſe man will never chuſe an infected atmoſphere, yet "He who fixes our lot in life" will protect him in it in the way of duty, and will furniſh an antidote to the contagion. A courageous piety doubles its caution when expoſed to an impure air, but a prudent piety will never voluntarily plunge into it. It will never forget, that if the corruptions of the world are ſo dangerous, they are rendered ſo by thoſe of our own hearts, ſince we carry about us a conſtitution diſpoſed to infection. The Chriſtian will make a conſcience of letting it appear, that

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that he differs in very important points from thoſe with whom buſineſs or ſociety brings him into contact; leſt, by the facility and kindneſs of his general behaviour, they ſhould be led into an error as to his principles. For worldly men, having been accuſtomed to connect narrowneſs, reſerve, and gloom, with ſerious piety, they might infer from his pleaſant deportment and frank addreſs, that his principles were as lax as his manners are diſengaged.

He will, therefore, be careful, not unneceſſarily to alienate them by any thing forbidding in his exterior; he will cheerfully fall in with any plan of theirs conſiſtent with his own principles; and more eſpecially, ſhould it be any plan of benevolence and general utility, and one more promiſing than his own, he will never feel backward to promote it, through the mean fear of transferring the popularity of the meaſure to another. Yet he acts, nevertheleſs, as knowing there is no humility in a man's taking a falſe meaſure of his own under-

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ſtanding, and therefore does not give up his independence of mind, when the ſuperiority of the ſcheme of the other does not carry conviction to his judgment. He will firſt clear his motive, and, next, his prudence in the meaſure, and then be as prompt in action as thoſe who ruſh into it without deliberation or principle.

He keeps his ultimate end in view, even in the moſt ordinary concerns, and on occaſions which to others may not ſeem likely to promote it. He knows that good breeding will give currency to good ſenſe; that good ſenſe adds credit to virtue, and even helps to ſtrip religion of its tendency to diſpleaſe. By his exactneſs in performing the common duties of life more accurately than other men, he may lead them to look from the action up to the principle which produced it; and when they ſee the advantages ariſing from ſuch carefulneſs of conduct, they may be induced to examine into the reaſons; and from inquiring, to adopting, is not always a remote ſtep. He may thus lead

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lead them into an inſenſible imitation, without the vain idea of preſenting himſelf as a model; for he wiſhes them to admire, not him, but the ſource from which he draws both what he believes and what he is.

While he ſuggeſts hints for their benefit, he is willing they ſhould think the ſuggeſtion their own; that they owe it to reflection, and not to inſtruction. Like the great Athenian philoſopher, he does not ſo much aim to teach wiſdom to others, as to put them in the way of finding it out for themſelves. His piety does not leſſen his urbanity, even towards thoſe, who are obviouſly deficient in ſome points, which he deems of high importance. If they are uſeful members of the great body of ſociety, he is the firſt to commend their activity, to acknowledge their amiable qualities, to do juſtice to their ſpeeches or writings, while they are diſconnected with dangerous or doubtful objects. On general ſubjects he never labours to diſcredit their opinions, unleſs they obviouſly ſtand in the way of

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ſomething of more worth. But all theſe cheerfully-allowed merits will never make him loſe ſight of any grand deficiency in the principle, of any thing erroneous in the tendency.

Of his own religion he neither makes a parade nor a ſecret; he is of opinion, that to avow his ſentiments, prevents miſtakes, ſaves trouble, obviates conjectures, and maintains independence. He acknowledges them with modeſty, and defends them with firmneſs. On other occaſions, inſtead of ſhutting himſelf up in a cloſe and ſullen reſerve, becauſe others do not agree with him in the great cauſe which lies neareſt his heart, he is glad that the general diffuſion of knowledge has ſo multiplied the points at which well-educated men can have acceſs to the minds of each other, points at which improvements in taſte and ſcience may be reciprocally communicated, the tone of converſation raiſed, and ſociety rendered conſiderably uſeful, and ſometimes in a high degree profitable.

But

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But notwithſtanding the clearneſs of his own ſpirit, and the intimations of an enlightened conſcience, he yet carries about with him ſuch a modeſt ſenſe of his own liableneſs to what is wrong, as keeps up in his mind the idea, that the error may poſſibly be on his ſide. This feeling, though it never makes him adopt through weakneſs the opinion of another, makes him always humble in the defence of his own. He oppoſes what is obviouſly bad with an earneſt but ſober zeal, a fervid but unboiſterous warmth, a vigorous but calm perſeverance.

He will not hunt for popularity; he knows that this is one of the common dangers from which even good men are not exempt; for after all, the mere good men of the world do not monopolize all credit. Highly principled and pious men form a powerful and increaſing minority, which, by concord, firmneſs, and prudence, often makes no inconſiderable figure. When viewed collectively,

"Bright as a ſun the ſacred city ſhines."

Each individual, however, according as he contri-

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contributes or may fancy he contributes to the brightneſs, is in danger of priding himſelf on the general effect. And many a weak or deſigning man, placing himſelf under the broad ſhelter of what he delights to call *the religious world*, limits his zeal to the credit of being accounted a member, inſtead of extending it to the arduous duties it impoſes, while he ſuperciliouſly decries many a worthy perſon, who, without the pretenſion, performs the functions. Popularity thus ſought after and obtained, whether within or without the pale, even of a religious community, is of a dangerous tendency, and a truly Chriſtian mind will alike tremble to beſtow or receive the praiſe.

But if the Chriſtian character we have been faintly attempting to ſketch, poſſeſs a commanding ſtation, either in fortune, rank, or talent, eſpecially if he combine them; his character, without any aſſumption of his own, without any affectation of ſuperiority, will, by its own weight, its own attraction, above all, by its conſiſtency, be a ſort of rallying

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rallying point, round which the well diſpoſed, the timid, and the young, will reſort to obtain a ſanction, and to fortify their principles. For, if it is not the *prevailing* principle, there is yet much more piety in the world, than the pious themſelves are willing to allow. If ſo ſtrange a phraſe may be allowed, we ſhould almoſt ſuſpect that, in a certain claſs, there is more good hypocriſy than bad; more who conceal their piety, than who make a diſplay of it. Many, who are ſecretly and ſincerely religious, want courage to avow their ſentiments, want reſolution to act up to them, either becauſe the popular tide runs another way, or becauſe they dread the imputation of ſingularity, and are afraid of raiſing a portentous cry againſt themſelves.

The good man reſpects the world's opinion, without making it the leading motive of his conduct. He never provokes hoſtility by any arrogant intimation that he does not care what people think of him, a conduct not more offenſive to others, than indicative of

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of a ſelf-ſufficient ſpirit. He is careful to avoid a particular *cut*. He will not be pointed at for any trifling peculiarity. He fences in, not only his ordinary, but his beſt actions, with prudence, well knowing how much the manner may expoſe the matter to miſrepreſentation. He does this not merely for his own credit, but becauſe, to a certain degree, with his reputation are involved the good of others and the honour of religion. He endeavours, as far as he can honeſtly do it, to remove prejudices, which an imprudent piety rather glories in augmenting, and thus widens the ſeparation between the two claſſes of characters. Whereas, that which is intrinſically good ſhould be always outwardly amiable. He, therefore, will not make his departure from the order which general uſage has eſtabliſhed, obſervable in any of the harmleſs and accredited modes of life. He will not voluntarily augment that wonder which his departure from the leſs innocent faſhions of the world muſt excite. The wonder will be ſufficiently great, why,

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in ſtronger caſes, he ſhould ſubject himſelf to a diſcipline different from theirs, and they will aſk where is the uſe of aiming to be better than thoſe whom they call good?

By the cheerful alacrity with which he performs and receives all acts of kindneſs, he gives the beſt anſwer to Lord Shafteſbury's character of Chriſtianity, "that it is ſo taken up with the care of our future happineſs, as to throw away all the preſent;" a ſneer which is about as true as the other ſarcaſms of this eloquent but ſuperficial reaſoner; for if religion does call for ſome ſacrifices of pleaſure and of profit, yet every part of its practice increaſes our real happineſs, by the augmentation of our own virtue, as much as it advances that of others; by its promotion of kindneſs, beneficence, good will, and good order.

He not only refuſes his time and his example to ſcenes of luxury and diſſipation; his ſuperfluous wealth has alſo a higher deſtination; he muſt not, however, be expected to aim at a primitive frugality, many of

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of the ſuperfluities of life having, in ſome meaſure, become claſſed among its neceſſaries. The ſpirit of a Chriſtian can never be a penurious ſpirit. His habits of living will be proportioned to his rank and fortune; taking, however, the average expenditure of many of the more diſcreet. He will never, even on religious grounds, by the example of parſimony, furniſh the ſordid with a pretence of accumulation.

He has another powerful motive for avoiding extravagance. He knows that a well-regulated economy is the only infallible ſource of independence. He will not, therefore, laviſh in idle ſplendor a fortune, that he may be driven to recruit by ſacrifices, which, by robbing him of his freedom, will diminiſh his virtue. He thinks that what Tacitus has ſaid of a public exchequer is not leſs true of a private purſe, that which is exhauſted by profligacy muſt be repaired by rapacity. This incommodious rectitude will expoſe him to the diſlike of leſs correct men; for, after all that has been urged againſt

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againſt the adoption of religious doctrines, it is not ſo much the ſtrictneſs of opinion, as of practice, which renders a man obnoxious. He may be of any religion he pleaſes, provided he will live like thoſe who have none. If he be convivial and accommodating, they will not care if he worſhip Brama and Veeſhnoo; though they would not perhaps forgive his profeſſing the Hindu faith, if it involved the neceſſity of their dining with him upon rice; nor would he be pardoned for embracing the doctrines of the Arabian Prophet while the Koran continues to prohibit the uſe of wine.

Though pleaſure is not the leading object of his purſuit, he yet finds more than thoſe, who ſpend their lives in purſuit of nothing elſe. He finds the range of innocent and elegant enjoyment ſufficiently ample and attractive, without being driven for a reſource, to the diſqualifying groſſneſs of ſenſuality, or the relaxing allurements of diſſipation. The fine arts, in all their lovely and engaging forms of beauty, the ever new

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new delights of literature, whether wooed in its lighter graces, or fought in its more ſubſtantial attractions, the exchange

From grave to gay, from lively to ſevere,

ſhed ſweet, and varied, and exhauſtleſs charms on his leiſure hours, and ſend him back with renewed freſhneſs, added vigour, and increaſed animation to his neceſſary employments.

Though the ſtrictly pious man is more expoſed to temptation in the world than in retirement, yet he finds in it reaſons which ſtimulate him to more circumſpection. He is aware that he lies more open to obſervation, and of courſe to cenſure. As he is more obſerved by others, he more carefully obſerves himſelf. He watches his own faults with the ſame vigilance with which worldly men watch the faults of others, and for the ſame reaſon, that he may turn them to his own profit: the more he is ſurrounded with temptations, the more he is driven to feel his want of divine protection. If his talents or exertions are flattered, he flies more earneſtly to *his* direction, "from whom

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whom cometh every good and perfect gift." We appeal to the pious reader, whether he does not frequently feel more circumspect and less confident in society from which he fears deterioration, than in that on which he depends for improvement; — whether he does not feel a sort of perilous security in company, in which an expansion of heart lessens his self-distrust; and whether he has never, by leaning on the friend, looked less to Him "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy."

If in debate he is sometimes accused of shewing too much warmth in defence of religion, while its opponent, by his superior calmness, establishes his own character for moderation and good temper, it is because it costs the latter little to manifest a coolness which is the natural effect of indifference. The man who plays for nothing need not be moved whatever turn the game may take; while he, whose dearest interests are at stake, will not easily hide the emotion which he cannot but feel. When King Solomon

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ſomon decreed, as a teſt of affection, that the living child ſhould be cut in pieces, the pretended mother calmly ſubmitted to the deciſion. She had nothing to loſe. Her hope was dead. She would enjoy ſeeing her competitor reduced to her own deſolate ſtate; while the real mother, who had a vital intereſt in the object to be ſacrificed, was tortured at the propoſal. The genuineneſs of the feeling betrayed the reality of the relation.

The Chriſtian, circumſtanced as we have deſcribed him, hardly dares wiſh for an uninterruptedly ſmooth and proſperous courſe; for, though he endeavours to ſit looſe to the world, every ſevere diſappointment or privation makes him feel that he ſtill clings too fondly to it; every trial and every loſs, therefore, make him relax ſomething of the firmneſs of his graſp.

Is your Chriſtian, then, perfect, you will perhaps aſk? Aſk himſelf. With deep and ſincere ſelf-abaſement he will anſwer in the negative. He will not only confeſs more

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failings than even his accuſers aſcribe to him, but he will own what they do not always charge him with — ſins. He will acknowledge that there is no natural difference between himſelf and his cenſurer, but that, through divine grace, the one prays and ſtruggles againſt thoſe corruptions, the very exiſtence of which the other does not ſuſpect.

The peace of the confirmed Chriſtian lies not at the mercy of events. As on the agitated ocean, ſtorms and tempeſts never divert the faithful needle from its invariable object, ſo the diſtractions of the world ſhake not *his* confidence in Him who governs it. He remembers that theſe winds and waves are ſtill bearing him onward to his haven, while, on the ſtormy paſſage, they enable him to exhibit a trying but a conſtant evidence that God may be honoured in all, even in the moſt unpromiſing, ſituations. Even in the worſt condition, a real Chriſtian is ſure of the preſence of his Maker, not only of his eſſential preſence, which he has in

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in common with all, but the preſence of his grace; not only the ſenſe of his being, but the ſupport of his promiſe. God never appoints his ſervants to a difficult ſtation, but he gives them the aſſurance of aſſiſtance in it, and of ſupport under it. The ſolemn injunction, "Be ſtrong and work," thrice repeated by the prophet, to reprove the dilatory builders of the ſecond temple, was effectually enforced by the animating promiſe which followed it; *I will be with you.* When the Diſciples were ſent forth by their divine Maſter to the grandeſt, but moſt perilous taſk, to which ambaſſadors were ever appointed, they muſt have ſunk under the conflicts which awaited, the dangers which threatened, and the deaths which met them; but the ſingle promiſe, *I will be with you*, was to them ſtrength, and light, and life. The Chriſtian militant, though called to a milder warfare, has the ſame reiterated aſſurance; *I will be with you always even to the end of the world.*

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CHAP. XXV.

Candidus.

CANDIDUS is a genuine ſon of the Reformation; but being a layman, he does not think it neceſſary to define his faith ſo conſtantly as ſome others do, by an inceſſant reference to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies; though this reference would accurately expreſs his ſentiments: but, he obſerves, that it is become a kind of party ſtandard equally erected by each ſide in intended oppoſition to the other, ſo that the equivocal enſign would not determine to which he belongs. He gives, however, the moſt indiſputable proof of his zeal for theſe formularies, by the invariable conformity of his life and language to their principles.

From the warmth of his feelings, and the ſtrength of his attachment to the church which foſtered him, Candidus was once in

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no little danger of becoming a vehement party-man; he was, however, cured by a certain reluctance he found in his heart to undertake to hate half the world, which he found must be a necessary consequence. Observation soon taught him, that Christians would be far more likely to escape the attacks of unbelievers, if they could be brought to agree among themselves; but he saw with regret, that religion, instead of being considered as a common cause, was split into factions, so that the general interest was neglected, not to say, in some instances, nearly betrayed. And while the liege subjects of the same sovereign are carrying on civil war for petty objects and inconsiderable spots of ground, that strength, which should have been concentrated for the general defence, is spent in mutual skirmishes, and mischievous though unimportant hostilities; and that veneration of course forfeited, with which even the acknowledged enemy would have been compelled to behold an united Church.

Candidus

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Candidus is, however, firm in his attachments, though not exacting in his requisitions; catholic, but not latitudinarian; tolerant, not from indifference, but principle. He contemplates, with admiration, the venerable fabric under whose shelter he is protected. He adheres to it, not so much from habit as affection. His adherence is the effect of conviction, otherwise his tenacity might be prejudice. It is founded in education, strengthened by reflection, and confirmed by experience. But though he contemplates our ecclesiastical institutions with filial reverence himself, he allows for the effect of education, habit and conscience in others, who do not view them with his eyes. He is sorry for those who refuse to enter into her portal; he is more sorry for those who depart out of it, but far more concerned is he, for those who remain within her pale, with a temper hostile to her interests, with principles foreign to her genius; with a conduct unsanctified by her spirit.

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Like a true lover, he delights not to expatiate on any imperfection ſhe may have; but he will not, like an abſurd lover, inſiſt on any imperfection as an excellence. Perſuaded that a mole or a pimple is no material diminution of beauty, he will no more magnify them into a deformity than he will deny their exiſtence. His mind is ſo occupied with eſſential points, and ſo ſatisfied with their ſubſtantial worth, that he relinquiſhes whatever is of no vital importance to thoſe microſcopic eyes, which, being able to take in only the diminutive, value themſelves on the detection of ſpecks, as a diſcovery of their own, though keener eyes had diſcerned them long before, but ſlighted them as inſignificant. Satisfied that it is the beſt of all the churches which exiſt, he never troubles himſelf to enquire if it is the beſt that is poſſible. In the church of England he is contented with excellence, and is ſatisfied to wait for perfection till he is admitted a member of the Church triumphant.

Candidus

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Candidus made early the diſcovery of a ſecret which Charles the Fifth did not diſcover, till, by his ignorance of it, he had thinned the human race — the incurable diverſity of human opinions. This irremediable difference he turned to its only practical purpoſe, not the vain endeavour to convince others, but the leſs hopeleſs aim of improving his own forbearance. He even doubted whether this diſagreement, though a misfortune in the aggregate, was not even more calculated to promote individual piety, than an uniformity which would not have called this feeling into exerciſe.

The more he examines Scripture (and he is habitually examining it), the more he is perſuaded that the principles of his church are identical with the word of God; while he is enabled, by the ſame examination, to drink more deeply into that ſpirit of love, which warms his heart with kindneſs towards every conſcientious Chriſtian, who on

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ſome points thinks differently. His attachment is definite, but his charity knows no limits.

He obſerves that the loudeſt clamour for the Eſtabliſhment is not always raiſed by the moſt pious, nor the moſt affectionate of her diſciples; he therefore does not rejoice when he ſees her honoured name hoiſted as a political ſignal by thoſe, who are careleſs of her ſpiritual proſperity; and he ſometimes finds no inconſiderable difference between thoſe who toaſt her, and thoſe who ſtudy to promote her beſt intereſts; though the former obtain the reputation, which the others are only ſolicitous to deſerve. He evinces his own affection by his zeal in defending her cauſe when attacked, by his prudence in never careleſsly provoking the attack. Anxious that the walls of the ſacred temple ſhould be impregnable, he is ſtill more anxious that the fires of her altars ſhould burn with undecaying brightneſs; and that while her guardians are properly watching over the ſecurity of the one, the flame of the

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the other be not extinguiſhed. He gives the moſt unequivocal proof that he attends faithfully to her doctrines, by never ſeparating them from her precepts, while he endeavours to incorporate both into his practice; adorning them by his example, recommending them in his writings, and illuſtrating them in his converſation.

If he produce little ſenſation among the intemperate, who exhibit their fidelity to the church by always repreſenting her as on the very verge of deſtruction; yet he would, were the danger preſent, go greater lengths in her defence than ſome of her more declamatory champions; nay he does more now to avert her ruin, than they who ſeem to make her ſafety depend on their clamour. If he is not perpetually predicting open war, he is watchful againſt the hollow ſecurity of a falſe peace. The moſt difficult, but not the leaſt important part of his care, is not more to vindicate her againſt avowed enemies, than againſt friends at once vociferous and ſupine.

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Candidus, though a good lover, is a bad hater, and it is this defect of hatred, which, with a certain claſs, brings his love into ſuſpicion. He has obſerved ſome who evince their attachment by their virulence againſt what they diſapprove, rather than by cultivating, in ſupport of what is right, that ſpirit which is "firſt pure, then peaceable," and which, if it be not peaceable, is not pure. Theſe are more remarkable for their dread of external evils, than their ſolicitude for the promotion of internal piety. Their religion conſiſts rather in repulſion than attraction. On the other hand, it muſt be obſerved, that Candidus has none of that pliancy, which, in this relaxed age, obtains in a different quarter, the praiſe of liberality from thoſe who, thinking one religion about as good as another, are of courſe tolerant of any, becauſe indifferent to all.

He has learned from the errors of two oppoſite parties, that fanaticiſm teaches men to deſpiſe religion, and bigotry to hate it. He knows that his candour is eſteemed laxity by

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by the prejudiced, and his firmneſs intolerance by the irreligious. There is, however, no ambiguity in his moderation; and he never, for the ſake of popularity with either party, leaves it doubtful on what ground he takes his ſtand. Nor does he ever renounce a right principle, becauſe one party abuſes it, or another denies its exiſtence; and while he deprecates the aſſumption of *names* by impoſtors, it does not alter his opinion of the *things* they originally ſignified; for inſtance, he does not think patriotiſm is a romance, nor diſintereſtedneſs a chimera, nor fervent piety a deluſion, nor charity unorthodox, nor a ſaint neceſſarily a hypocrite.

He obſerves among his acquaintance, that there are ſome who ſedulouſly endeavour to fix the brand of fanaticiſm on certain doctrines, which both the Bible and the Church not only recognize, but conſider as fundamental, as the key-ſtone of the ſacred arch on the ſtrength of which our whole ſuperſtructure reſts. Theſe doctrines, while they

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eject them from their own creed, they confound, in the creed of others, with certain dangerous opinions, with which they are by no means neceſſarily connected, though they uniformly charge thoſe who adopt the one claſs with invariably maintaining the other. It is in vain that the perſons ſo charged diſavow the opinions; it is to no purpoſe that they only deſire to be allowed to know what they hold, and what they reject.

Candidus however, undaunted by clamour, and unmoved by inſinuation, tenaciouſly maintains the doctrine of human apoſtacy, of ſalvation by grace through faith, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit in renovating the heart. In her avowal of man's corruption, he inſiſts that the church of England is moſt emphatical. "Read," ſaid he one day, in earneſt converſation with one whom he could ſcarcely conſider but as a virtual Socinian within the pale of the Eſtabliſhment, "read the pointed and explicit confeſſion with which her ſervice opens." He holds the ſame language with ſome

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ſome others to whom the Church is a higher authority than the Bible, in regard to a ſubject next in connexion with that of human weakneſs, namely the agency of the Divine Spirit: he remarks that both theſe doctrines are recognized in every prayer and in every office; that they are eſpecially acknowledged in the *Collects*, thoſe brief but beautiful effuſions of devotion, which, for ſtrength of expreſſion, condenſation of the ſenſe, and neatneſs of compoſition, not only ſurpaſs every thing in the age in which they were compoſed, but remain unrivalled in the ſimilar addreſſes of our own time, whoſe beſt praiſe it is, that, in this period of fine writing, our petitionary forms are accounted more or leſs excellent, as they approach nearer, or recede farther from, thoſe models. Read their ſelf-abaſing acknowledgments — "Thou, God, who ſeeſt that we put not our truſt in any thing that we do" — "O God, foraſmuch as without Thee we are not able to pleaſe Thee" — "Becauſe the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall — "Grant

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that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without Thee, may, by Thee, be enabled to live according to Thy will" — "Cleanſe the thoughts of our hearts by the inſpiration of Thy holy ſpirit" — "Becauſe through the weakneſs of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace."

But there would be no end of enumeration. The ſame doctrines run through, and are incorporated with, the whole Liturgy. To get rid of them, mere omiſſions would be altogether inſufficient, we muſt tear up the whole web, we muſt weave another, we muſt weave it too with new materials; for the old threads would retain the colour of the old doctrines, and communicate the original character to the new piece; it is not only the old form that muſt be new caſt, but new principles that muſt be infuſed, a new train of ſentiments that muſt be adopted, in ſhort a new religion that muſt be ſubſtituted.

Candidus

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Candidus obſerves, that it is a proof how different the views of ſome of our contemporaries are on this ſubject from thoſe of the primitive church, that while, with ſome of the former, divine influence is a theme of deriſion rather than of reverence; in the other, whatever was pure and holy, was aſcribed to its operation. At the ſame time, being a diligent reader of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, as well as an accurate obſerver of what paſſes before his eyes, he is aware what abuſes have been and are ſtill practiſed, and what deceits carried on, under pretence of being *the work of the ſpirit*. The importance of the doctrine accounts for the imitations and counterfeits to which it is expoſed; and he knows that the abuſe of a thing is always pernicious in proportion to its excellence. The Old and New Teſtament abound with inſtances. To thoſe of the former St. Peter reverts, to guard his converts from thoſe of the latter,—"There were falſe prophets among the people, even as there ſhall be falſe teachers among you."

Another

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Another Apoſtle warns his hearers againſt the miſchiefs which he himſelf had ſeen produced by theſe impious pretenders, by inſtructing them to "try the ſpirits, whether they be of God." Hence Candidus adviſes, with an able divine*, to try the ſpirits ourſelves, not by putting them upon ſupernatural work, but to try them by a more infallible rule — by the doctrine they teach, that is, by its invariable conformity with Scripture. He thinks the ſame rule and the ſame neceſſity ſubſiſt now, in as full force, as when the injuction was given.

Candidus is aware that it is neceſſary, not only to be accurate in the uſe of his own terms, but to be on his guard againſt being miſled by the inaccuracy of the terms employed by others. He therefore takes care to aſcertain the character and temper of the man by whom any ambiguous term is uſed, as well as of him to whom the term is applied; without this caution he could not decide on the juſtneſs of the application.

* Dr. Owen.

Even

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Even the founder of the Epicurean ſect could ſay, *a man cannot live happily without living wiſely.* Now, though every man, whatever be his principles, muſt aſſent to this truth as a general propoſition, yet the phraſe, "living wiſely," conveyed a very different idea in the ſchool of an atheiſtical philoſopher, to what it would have conveyed in the follower of Zeno, and more eſpecially in the diſciple of Chriſt. Enthuſiaſm is one of theſe ambiguous terms.

Candidus is prudent on a principle which is ſometimes denied. He conſiders that prudence is, in an ardent character, more likely to be an effect of grace than even zeal; becauſe in the exerciſe of zeal he is indulging his natural temper, whereas in the other caſe he is ſubduing it; and he has found that to reſiſt a propenſity is generally more the effect of principle than to gratify it. Hence, he infers that if reſiſtance be a work of grace, the ſluggiſh and the cold-hearted may judge of their own conqueſt over nature by a ſuperinduced zeal, while he

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he preſumes *he* is conquering his own vehemence by a ſuperinduced prudence; thus the ſame truth is illuſtrated by directly oppoſite inſtances.

Againſt enthuſiaſm, therefore, it is unneceſſary to caution the diſcreet and enlightened Candidus. He avoids it as naturally as a wiſe man avoids folly, as a ſober man ſhuns extravagance. But then it is the thing itſelf, and not what bigots call ſo; it is the real entity, and not the ſpectre, againſt which he is on his guard; for, not being ſuperſtitious, he is not terrified by phantoms and goblins. He laments when he encounters a real enthuſiaſt, becauſe he knows that, even if honeſt, he is pernicious. But though he thinks him highly blameable, he does not think him worſe "than murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers." He thinks enthuſiaſm miſchievous, but he does not think it worſe than impiety, worſe than intemperance, worſe than infidelity, worſe than intolerance, worſe than any other flagitious vice; eſpecially, he does not think it

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worſe than all the other vices put together. Yet this he might be almoſt tempted to believe was the caſe, when he ſees other vices comparatively left to enjoy themſelves, and this doughty enormity, imaginary as well as real, ſingly attacked with the combined force of all the weapons which ought to be in turn applied to the whole family of ſin. As he is very ſkilful in ſymptoms, he takes care to aſcertain evident marks of the mania, palpable diagnoſticks of the rabid bite, before he pronounces on the diſeaſe, or proceeds to ſecure himſelf from the contagion.

By his well-exerciſed judgment, he can generally diſcover the different cauſes of the actual diſtemper. He can diſtinguiſh whether the patient is ſick of a deluded imagination, or from having been in contact with the infected; whether he is miſmanaged by artful, or injured by ignorant preſcribers; whether the malady lies in the weakneſs of his natural powers, the agitation of his animal ſpirits, or the vanity of his mind — whether it be an inflammation on the brain,

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or a tumour in the heart — ſome or all of theſe appearances commonly indicating the fanatical fever. In either caſe, he heartily ſubſcribes to the reality and danger of the diſtemper, but even then he does not poſitively pronounce that the weak are wicked, or the diſordered counterfeits.

But if, as is not ſeldom the caſe, he finds the appellation conferred only becauſe the objects of it are deeply ſenſible of the unſpeakable importance of religion, and the infinite value of eternal things — becauſe they are no more afraid of feeling than of underſtanding the great truths of Chriſtianity — becauſe they think their ſouls are not a property to be complimented away through fear; if he find, that with all their warmth they are rational, with all their zeal they are humble, with all their energy they are conſiſtent, with all their ſpirituality they are ſober; if they obey the precepts of the Goſpel as faithfully as they believe its doctrines — if their religion do not lie more in profeſſion than in performance — if they give

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give a ſtriking evidence of their love of God, by their tenderneſs to their fellow-creatures — if they are as liberal to their bodily wants, as they are, who forget to take their ſouls into the account — if their piety appear as much in their practice as in their diſcourſe, and their prudence keep pace with their earneſtneſs, then he will not be forward to impute to them, as the unpardonable ſin, thoſe animated ſentiments which are to themſelves "peace and joy in believing," and to others benignity. philanthropy, and kindneſs.

And as he does not call well-directed zeal fanaticiſm, nor generous ardour delirium, ſo he does not rank thoſe who believe in the omnipotence of divine grace among the enemies to virtuous action; nor does he ſuſpect that the advocates for ſtrenuous exertion are ſworn foes to faith. Nor does he ever diſavow a doctrine, which he has adopted on conviction, becauſe it may happen to be aſſociated in the mind of another man, with other doctrines which he himſelf cannot

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adopt. And as he knows ſomething of the internal conſtitution of the human heart and the nature of religious affections, he diſtinguiſhes between the ſanguine temper of youth, between that warmth which, in a rightly-turned mind, time will cool, and experience temper, and which will retain no more than a due degree of ſpirit, when its firſt effervescence has ſubſided; he diſtinguiſhes this ſpirit from that blind zeal and headlong violence, which, as they are a part of no religion, ſo they are a diſcredit to any.

He has obſerved, that the reaſon why we ſee ſuch mis-ſhapen repreſentations of religion ſet up for the finger of reproach or ridicule to point at, is, that the reviler has not been looking out for truth; he has not taken his draught, we will not ſay from the higheſt model, but from the fair average of ſerious Chriſtians; but he has taken it from the loweſt ſpecimen of what he has ſeen, and even more commonly from the diſtorted report of others. He was looking out for abſurdity, and where it is ſtudiouſly ſought, it

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it will not be difficult to find; and, if not found, it will be eaſily imagined. This caricature he produces as the repreſentative of the whole body; taking care, however, to preſerve in his portrait juſt reſemblance enough to ſhew a feature or two of the real face, that the diſguſting and exaggerated phyſiognomy may not prevent its being recognized. If no glimpſe of likeneſs could be traced, it would not anſwer the end; it would anſwer it ſtill leſs, if the prevailing character of the piece were not deformity.

Candidus is perſuaded that, of every combination of wickedneſs with folly which Satan has deviſed, hypocriſy is the greateſt, as being the moſt generally unprofitable. The hypocrite is ſure of being the abhorrence of both ſides of the queſtion. Where his duplicity is not ſuſpected, the world hates him for the *appearance* of piety; God, who knows the heart, hates him for the abuſe and the affectation of it. But, though Candidus deprecates hypocriſy, he is cautious of ſuſpecting it on light grounds, ſtill more of charging

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charging it home without proof. As he is not omniſcient, he cannot be quite ſure that any man who appears more than uſually pious *is* a hypocrite, nor does he ſo denominate him on that ſingle ground. As he cannot ſcrutinize his heart, he judges him by his actions, and leaves him to ſettle his motives with his Maker.

On the whole, if he meet with a man, the conſiſtency of whoſe life gives ſtronger evidence of the reality and depth of his religion than other men, he is reluctant in ſuſpecting him either of hypocriſy or enthuſiaſm. So far from it, he will find his own faith ſtrengthened, his own victory over the world confirmed, his own indifference to human applauſe increaſed, by ſuch a living exemplification of the truth of Chriſtianity, and calmly leave it to the inconſiderate, the incompetent, and the malevolent, to ſtigmatize the character which he reveres.

They who, when they obſerve eminent piety and zeal much above low water-mark, inſinuate that ſuch ſymptoms in the more

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animated Chriſtian prove his tendency to be a ſeparatiſt, pay a very wretched compliment to the Eſtabliſhed Church. Is it not implying, that her ſervice is not ſufficiently high and enlarged to ſatisfy an energetic ſpirit; that ſhe does not poſſeſs attractions to engage, and materials to fill, and ſpirit to warm a devout mind, but that a ſuperior degree of earneſtneſs will be in danger of driving its poſſeſſor to ſtray without her pale in ſearch of richer paſtures? Is it not virtually ſaying one of two things; either that a fervent piety is bad, or that the church is not good?

With Candidus, this is ſo far from being the caſe, he is ſo little "given to change," that he rejoices in belonging to a church of whoſe formularies we have already ſeen how much he had to ſay in commendation. In theſe ſtandards he rejoices to ſee Truth, as it were, pinned down, hedged in, and, as far as is poſſible, in this mutable world, preſerved and perpetuated. Her ſignificant and ſpiritual ordinances, and the large infuſion

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ſion of Scripture in her Offices and Liturgy, ſecure her from the fluctuations of human opinion; ſo that, if ever the principles of any of her miniſters ſhould degenerate, her ſervice would be protected from the viciſſitude. No ſentiments but thoſe of her preſcribed ritual can ever find their way into the deſk; and the deſk will always be a ſafe and permanent ſtandard for the pulpit itſelf, as well as a teſt by which others may aſcertain its purity.

He values her government for the ſame reaſon for which he values her Liturgy, becauſe it gives a definite bound to the incloſure, never forgetting that the fruit incloſed is of deeper importance than the fence which incloſes. He always remembers, however, that, at no very remote period, when the hedge was broken down, diſorder and miſrule overſpread the fair vineyard.

Among other doctrines, he is an accurate ſtudier of the doctrine of proportions, in whatever regards the eccleſiaſtical inſtitution. Though he cordially approves her forms and diſcipline,

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diſcipline, though he believes they are not only eſſential to her dignity, but neceſſary to her exiſtence, yet he diſcriminates between what is ſubordinate and what is ſupreme. If the one is the body, the other is the ſoul. It is to her ſtrenuouſly maintaining the doctrines of the New Teſtament, that he looks for her preſervation. This is her Palladium. Nor does it more reſemble the fabled ſtatue of Ilium, becauſe, like that, it fell from heaven to earth, than in its having dropped down *while the Prince was building the citadel.*

If he adopt the Liturgy for his model, it is becauſe he perceives how completely ſhe has adopted the Bible for hers, in never giving undue prominence to one doctrine to the diſparagement of the reſt; like *her*, he appreciates and ſettles them according to their due degrees of importance.

Among his many reaſons for venerating the Church of England, the principal is, that ſhe is an integral and diſtinguiſhed portion of the Church of Chriſt. In the ſpe-

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cific, he never loſes ſight of the generic character; as a Churchman, he is firſt a Chriſtian, and a Proteſtant. The ramification, ſo far from ſeparating him from the root, unites him more cloſely to it. If he bear much fruit, it is becauſe he is inſerted into the true vine. Though quick-ſighted to what he conceives to be the errors, he does liberal juſtice to whatever is valuable in other communities. In many members of thoſe which differ from his own, more in forms of government, than in any of the eſſentials of doctrine, he ſees powerful ability and ſound learning to admire, and much ſubſtantial piety to venerate. Even with regard to that church, from the corruptions and ſpiritual tyranny of which our own has been providentially reſcued, he acknowledges much excellence in thoſe miſſals from which our own ritual was partly extracted; he ſees in many of her writers a genius, a ſublimity, and an unction, that have rarely been ſurpaſſed. In ſhort, he exerciſes charity and kindneſs to all ſects and all parties, except one, a ſect

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which has lately been well animadverted on. It is not, indeed, a diſtinct ſect; it is not a ſeparate community, for then his prudence might eſcape all contact with it; but it is one, whoſe ſloth, producing the ſame inſinuating effect which the ſubtlety of the Jeſuits formerly produced, without giving us, like the ſchool of Loyala, any hope of its extinction; has found means to thruſt not a few of its followers into every religious denomination and ſociety in the world — the ſect of the *non-doers*.

In theſe worſt of ſectaries, no vaunting profeſſion of faith, no flaming diſplay of orthodoxy, no clamour for favourite, no hoſtility againſt reprobated, doctrines, no outcry for or againſt the church or the ſtate, will ever raiſe them in his eſtimation. He accounts them the barren fig-tree of every community in whoſe ſoil they ſpring up. They may, indeed, claim to belong to it, but it is as the worm belongs to the root, the canker to the bud, the excreſcence to the healthful body.

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In the conſtitution of the Eſtabliſhed Church, Candidus approves the degrees of rank and dignity, and the gradations of income. But, if he never entertains a deſire that the higheſt were lower, he cannot help breathing a cordial wiſh that the loweſt were higher. Convinced, however, that every thing human is in its very nature imperfect, he conſoles himſelf with the hope, a hope which is confirmed by actual inſtances, that ſome of the moſt highly endowed will be examples of Chriſtian liberality, and ſome of the moſt lowly, of patient ſubmiſſion; ſo that their ſeveral portions may, while they enable them to furniſh a pattern to others, miniſter to their own eternal good.

But evils which he cannot remove, he will never aggravate. He holds it criminal even to agitate queſtions which only feſter and inflame the wounds they are meant to cure: he knows that fruitleſs diſcuſſion may irritate, but ſeldom heals; that querulous animadverſions on irremediable grievances only

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only ſerve, by ſtirring up diſcontent, to excite inſubordination.

He reſpects every order and degree among them for the Lord's ſake; and, if a caſe ſhould occur in which he cannot honour the man, he will honour his office. If called on for his opinion as to any defect, his cenſures are diſcreet; if not called upon, he is ſilent. But if his cenſures, when juſt, are temperate; his commendations, when merited, are cordial. Above all, he holds the practice to be equally diſhoneſt, diſingenuous and vulgar, to make communities and bodies anſwerable for the faults and errors of individuals; while he never commends or vindicates any thing decidedly wrong, either in individuals or in communities.

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CHAP. XXVI.

The eſtabliſhed Chriſtian.

WE have it on the authority of a fine writer, that, *not to know what occurred before we were born, is to be always a child.* Yet while the intellect may be improved to the higheſt pitch by this antecedent knowledge, the will and the paſſions may, notwithſtanding our ſtudy of the moſt elaborate diſcuſſions on their nature and effects, remain in the ſame ſtate of childiſh imbecility. Hiſtory and philoſophy, though they inform the underſtanding, and aſſiſt the judgment, cannot rectify the obliquities of the heart.

The experience of all paſt ages has produced ſuch an accumulated maſs of diſappointment, ſuch a long unbroken ſeries of mortification, ſuch a reiterated conviction of the emptineſs of this world, and of the inſufficiency

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ficiency of its power to confer happineſs, that one would be ready to imagine, that to every freſh generation, nay, to every period of the life of every individual in every generation, wiſdom would not have all her admonitions to begin over again. One would not think that the ſame truths require, not only to be afreſh preſſed upon us, but to be again unfolded; to be repeated as if all previous experiment had never been tried, as if all foregoing admonition had either never been given, or had been completely obliterated; as if the world were about to begin on a freſh ſtock of materials, to ſet out on an untried ſet of principles, as if it were about to enter on an original courſe of action of which preceding ages had left no precedent; on a line of conduct of which our forefathers had bequeathed no inſtances of failure, had experienced no defeat of expectation.

We read perpetually of multitudes, who lived in the long indulgence of unbounded appetite, who, in the gratification of every

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desire, had drained the world to its last dregs; but does the narrative of ages record a single instance, that the end proposed and followed up in the fervent pursuit, I mean happiness, was ever attained? We contemplate these recorded examples, we lament the disgusts, and pity the mortifications of the disappointed; but who applies the knowledge to any practical use, to any personal purpose? We are informed, but we are not instructed. We resolve, in full confidence of our own wisdom, and complete contempt for that of our predecessors, to make the experiment for ourselves. We, too, pursue the same end, and probably by the same path; secure that we shall escape the mistakes into which others have fallen, assured that we shall avoid the evils which they have incurred, evils which we attribute to their ignorance, or their neglect, to their error, or their indiscretion.

We set out fresh adventurers in the old track. We weary our wits, we waste our fortune, we exhaust our spirits. Still we are

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are perſuaded that *we* have deviſed the expedient of which our precurſors were ignorant; that *we* have hit on the very diſcovery which had eluded their ſearch; that *we* have found the ingredient, which they, in mixing up the grand compound, earthly happineſs, had overlooked.

The natural and preſſing object of our deſire is preſent enjoyment; thoſe, therefore, who gratify our wayward fancies, or remove from us any immediate inconvenience, are ſure of our favour. On them we ſeize as inſtruments for promoting our ſchemes of gratification, forgetting that they have ſchemes of their own to promote; that they are equally looking to us for our inſtrumentality; and that, if they are making any undue ſacrifices to us, it is but in order to the furtherance of thoſe ſchemes. Such is mere worldly friendſhip. As the intellectual eye ſeldom runs along the whole train of conſequences, which is the only true way of taking our meaſure of things, the ſame principle which attaches us to the friend who

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is humouring us, makes us murmur at the diſpenſations of Him who is correcting us, diſpenſations which, though painful at the moment, may, by a train of circumſtances of which we know neither the deſign nor the proceſs, be inſuring to us future benefits. But having no clear pereception of remote good, we have no very ardent deſires after it. Our ſhort-ſightedneſs concurs with our ſelfiſhneſs in making this falſe eſtimate.

Divine goodneſs, which we perhaps have hitherto withſtood, at length, when He who gives the grace gives the deſire, touches the heart ſo long cloſed againſt it. The ſtill ſmall voice which was drowned in the noiſe and tumult of the world is at length heard, and, through longer forbearance, and farther communications of that grace, is at length obeyed. Religion operating on the convictions of the heart, and our humility improving with the experience of our own miſtakes, gradually remove the veil through which we had hitherto beheld the world.

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As the heavenly light grows ſtronger, the falſe lights, drawn from the exhalations of ſenſuality and ſelf-indulgence, which at once glimmer and miſlead, are quenched. The day-ſtar begins to dawn. In this clearer atmoſphere, objects aſſume their proper ſhape; every thing appears in its true colours. The mind is inſenſibly diſenchanted, the views take another turn. As the eye attains a more diſtinct ſight, the deſires acquire a juſter aim. We diſcover that the beſt things on earth have an inſeparable imperfection appended to them. Referring to our paſt experience, or preſent clearer obſervation of things, we find that the delights which we fancied were indefectible are dying away; we find that pleaſure diſſolves, wit miſleads, riches corrupt, power intoxicates, hope deceives, poſſeſſion diſappoints; — and, which now ſtamps upon our renewed feelings the deepeſt impreſſion of the vanity of human things, difficulties ſink our ſpirits, ſucceſs agitates them: what we want, we deſire with a painful ardency; what we

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have, we either fear to enjoy, or the enjoyment is poiſoned by the fear of loſing it; and that intenſe delight could not long be borne, even if it could be obtained. The convictions of the Chriſtian being ſettled, he is now deſirous of imparting the benefits of his own experience to his younger friends, who, in their turn, commonly reject the transfer, thinking him to be as much miſtaken as he had formerly thought his predeceſſors — like him, they prefer the experiment to the advice, the riſk to the caution.

The ſober thinker is now convinced, that between the fever of deſire, the uncertainty of attainment, the diſappointment attending what is attained, the alternation of hope and fear, the dread of the worſt things, and the inſuppreſſible ſenſe of the brevity of the beſt, the mere man of the world can never be ſubſtantially happy. The Chriſtian thus warned, thus wakened, is thankful, not for the miſtakes he has committed, but for the ſalutary vexations that have attended them.

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The monitory wiſdom of paſt ages riſes in his eſteem, in the ſame proportion as his own ſinks. Above all, he has found, that there is no infallible wiſdom but in the oracles of inſpiration; there he looks for whatever is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs." There only he has found, that the "man of God may be thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works."

In peruſing the ſacred records, he even derives conſolation from what has been a ſource of deriſion to the profane, and of wonder to the ignorant — the fidelity with which the inſpired writers have exhibited holy men, in the moſt cenſurable inſtances of their conduct, and in the loweſt ſtages of their hope and confidence. He there beholds the choſen ſervants of God wading through doubts and apprehenſions, aſſaulted by temptations, perplexed by trials. Had they never been preſented but in their happier ſeaſons, but in their triumphs and their victories, the compariſon with his own failures,

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ures, with his own occaſional depreſſions and fluctuations, would have ſunk his ſpirits which they now ſupport, would have weakened his faith which they now confirm.

He rejoices in the Goſpel as a ſtream flowing from the fountain of love and mercy, the ſpring of all ſpiritual life and motion; he finds that genuine Chriſtianity differs from every other good, as ſpirit differs from matter. It eſtabliſhes the foundation of happineſs as well as goodneſs; and both, not on any ſuppoſed merit in the recipient, but on the free mercy and voluntary grace of God. While it exacts obedience to the divine law, it ſhews that the requiſition cannot be complied with, but by divine aſſiſtance; what it commands, it beſtows; if it requires the will, it confers the power.

In the retroſpect of his paſt life, he is aſtoniſhed at the patience and forbearance of God under his own repeated provocations; eſpecially he reflects with wonder, that the very proſperity which had been the

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ſpecial gift of his Maker, had alienated his heart from him. He is humbled to think, that it was in the very arms of his goodneſs he forgot him; when he taſted moſt abundantly of his bounty, then it was he neglected him moſt; when he moſt largely enjoyed his overflowing beneficence, the gift induced not gratitude, but intoxication. He looks back with remorſe on the time he has waſted, and the errors he has committed, but he does not ſpend his remaining ſtrength ſo much in regretting as in repairing them.

To be enchanted with things which have not much in them, he now finds is the mark of a weak and undiſtinguiſhing mind. It ſhews the abſence of a rational underſtanding, and the want of a manly ſpirit, to be inordinately attached to any object, whoſe worth will not bear out our judgment, and vindicate our attachment. Habitual conſiderations on the littleneſs of preſent things, the diſappointing nature of all earthly enjoyments, the grandeur of his future proſpects, with nearer views of the eternal world, all combine

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combine to give continence to his mind, moderation to his desires, and sobriety to his conduct.

We are slow in making the discovery of the large capacity of the human mind; that it is made capable of a felicity commensurate to its nature; that the rudiments, both of eternal misery and happiness, are laid in our souls here. Being endued with such faculties and powers for seeking the favour of God, and such means and graces for attaining to his presence, the Christian finds that the misery must be proportionate in missing it. He has also learned, that it is not the design of the Gospel merely to announce to us a state of future blessedness, but to fit us for it. It is but half the work of infinite love to provide a heaven for men; it is its completion to make man a suitable recipient of the bliss prepared for him. Without this gracious provision, Christianity had been a scheme to tantalize, and not to save us. He sees that there is a higher destination for the passions than that to which he has hitherto

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hitherto applied them. Love, joy, hope, deſire, the very propenſities which have formerly miſled him, having found their true object, now ripen him for that ſtate from which they had long ſeduced him; each contributes its quota towards framing him into a diſpoſition for happineſs, and to prepare him for its ultimate enjoyment.

He has long ſince diſcovered that the beſt pleaſures of earth are drawn from ciſterns not fountains, that our moſt prized delights are neither pure in themſelves, nor permanent in their duration. The immortal mind cannot be ſatisfied in the purſuit, nor even in the enjoyment. They cannot confer what they do not poſſeſs, perfection and ſtability. Things periſhable themſelves cannot ſatisfy the deſires of beings made for eternity. The ſoul cannot exert its full powers, nor unfold its whole nature, nor diſplay all its operations on this contracted ſtage. "The bed is narrower than that a man can ſtretch himſelf on it." There is no proportion between ſuch a ſcanty ſpace and ſuch large capa-

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capabilities, ſuch trivial pleaſures and ſuch boundleſs deſires, ſuch a fleeting duration and a ſpirit formed for immortality.

He has found that it is of preſſing neceſſity that this futurity be a happy one, otherwiſe the very circumſtance that it is endleſs, which makes the happineſs complete, turns againſt us, and makes the conſummation of our miſery. It is difficult to ſay whether the ſhortneſs of the time allotted us to ſecure this futurity, or the eternity of the ſtate to be ſecured, ſhould moſt ſtimulate our religious exertions. We have frequently ſpoken of the duty of learning of an enemy, here the leſſon is peculiarly awakening. The reaſon aſſigned in the viſion of St. John why the *great* enemy is working with ſuch powerful energy, is, becauſe *the time is ſhort.* Shall we be equally aſſured of the brevity of our own time, and be leſs active in ſecuring our ſalvation, than he is in promoting our deſtruction.

The boundleſſneſs of the divine perfections preſents to the ſoul the wideſt range for

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for the exercise of faith, and the Gospel teaches the most unshaken confidence of happiness in the death of Christ. But that God is the King *eternal and immortal*, is to us the broad basis on which all the rest of the promises are built. It would moderate the delight with which we consider his attributes, if eternity were not annexed to them; his immortality alone being the pledge and security of ours. "The weight of glory" announced by the Apostle derives its highest value from its being an *eternal* weight.

Of the joys of heaven there is in Scripture no description. This is wisely avoided, as the tastes, desires, and inclinations of men are so different, one conceiving that to be of the very essence of happiness, for which another has little relish. They are intimated by negatives, or by shadows, figures, and images of things, to which a general idea of enjoyment is annexed. There is only one idea respecting heaven, which is clear, and plain, and definite—

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its *eternity*. Of duration every man has ſome preciſion in his ideas. Other delineations might have led to diſpute; but if the different notions of the nature of happineſs might have kindled debate; about its immortality, there can be but one opinion. Perpetuity gives the finiſhing ſtamp to perfection.

And as we frame our ideas of eternity from what we know of duration; ſo we frame our faint notions of God, from what we conceive of goodneſs. We meditate on the excellencies of the higheſt created ſpirits, and then imagine ſomething of God, though inconceivably elevated above that poor conception, yet not contradictory to it. We fill our mind with the idea of wiſdom, goodneſs, knowledge, power, holineſs, juſtice, purity, and to each of theſe attributes we prefix that of infinite; never forgetting that God is almoſt as much above our excellences as our weakneſſes. Yet we can but aſcribe to Him all that we feel or can imagine of perfection, and we ſhould be

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be ſtill more loſt in the mere abſtract notion, if we had not ſome ſenſible feelings, though infinitely imperfect, derived from reality and exemplification.

The Chriſtian muſt fill his vocation to the laſt. In this or that profeſſion men are looking forward to the period when they may lay it down with ſafety and honour: the Chriſtian's ſafety and honour conſiſt in his carrying it on to the end. But there is between them this point of agreement. The man of buſineſs contracts his ſchemes, diminiſhes his labours, mitigates his activity, all with a view to his ultimate repoſe. If the religious man act thus, he does it with another view, and to a higher end. If he ſeek reſt from his toils, it is in order to find a ſurer reſt in God; if he contract his ſchemes, it is that he may enlarge his views. There is no ſpecific period in which he can ſay, My work is done, till he lies down in the grave, where no man can work. He now finds that the tranquillity of his occupations, the beauties of nature, the peaceful

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ful pleaſures of retirement, pleaſures the moſt natural and congenial to the mind of unſophiſticated man, would ſtill be too little to fill his deſires; that they would leave a melancholy void in his heart, without the ſenſe of *His* preſence whoſe gift they are. While a conſcioufneſs both of the preſence and favour of God gives a reliſh to every enjoyment, and heightens even common comforts into bleſſings.

There is a progreſſion in the habits of a Chriſtian. In the advancement of his courſe his purſuits are probably ſlower, but his interruptions are fewer. If his progreſs be even leſs obvious, leſs apparently active, he is perhaps more ſubſtantially improving, more ſpiritually advancing. When, from the infirmities of declining life, he may ſeem to be doing nothing, he may then be doing moſt. If he is able to look leſs abroad, he is looking more within. He begins to taſte more of the fruits of that victory which the Apoſtle deſcribes as the evidence of a renovated heart; to give this beſt proof that he

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is "born of God," "he overcometh the world." This, if one of his lateſt, is one of his moſt important conqueſts. But though he has turned away his eyes from the world, becauſe it never ſatisfied the deſires of his heart, he endeavours to the laſt to ſerve it with much more ſedulity than when he looked to it for his happineſs.

He has long been perſuaded, that even in this preſent low ſtate of being, we muſt attain ſomething of the rudiments of future happineſs. He has learned that the firſt principles muſt be formed now, which are to have their conſummation in heaven. To look forward to the completion of a ſtate and character, of which we have not ſo much as begun to acquire the elements, is not acting according to any of the analogies of common life. The beginning and the proceſs of any thing we have in contemplation always partake in an inferior, but ſtill in a ſimilar and progreſſive meaſure, of the nature of the end. It has the ſame properties and tendencies, in its initial ſtate, with that which

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which is hereafter to be compleated. We muſt begin to lay in our hearts the foundation both of the knowledge and love of God, if we would hereafter attain to that perfection in both, which we are told is of the eſſence of the heavenly happineſs.

He has long found that there is no peace to the mind that does not entertain ſome one ultimate end. Broken views and mixed deſigns diſtract its attention, and corrode its quiet. In moſt of the enterprizes of life, a man, beſides being abſorbed by preſent and perhaps oppoſing ſchemes, is looking anxiouſly forward to ſome point of change. He has no ſooner framed one project, but his views are penetrating to ſomething beyond it; ſomething which he ſhall adopt as ſoon as he ſhall have accompliſhed all his proximate objects. Thus the projecting, and fluctuating, and proſpective mind, is never at reſt. There is no ſtability but in God. No grand aim, no fixed poſition, no ultimate end, but in him. He who has once choſen his Redeemer for his portion, is ſubject to no more viciſſi-

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viciſſitudes; has no after-reference, no remoter purſuit, no further deſign in reſerve.

He, however, who makes heaven his aim, and God his end, will not therefore live idly, as if, his choice being decided, his object being ſettled, he had nothing more to do. His object is indeed fixed, his choice is irreverſibly determined, his portion is unalterably decided; but that which elevates his deſires alſo enlarges his capacities, ſo that his purſuit never ceaſes, his ſearch is never finiſhed, nor ever can be, unleſs the perfections of its object could be exhauſted. Mr. Boyle obſerves of a certain mineral, that a man may conſume his whole life in the ſtudy of it, without ever arriving at the knowledge of all its properties. How much more ſhall he who ſeeks to "acquaint himſelf with God," find that his entire life is too ſhort, his whole powers too ſmall, to find out the Almighty to perfection! This he will never completely accompliſh on earth, yet his deſires will grow with his attainments.

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But as the happineſs of a Chriſtian is chiefly in proſpect, he joyfully looks forward to its glorious conſummation in a better world. "When I awake up after thy likeneſs I ſhall be ſatisfied," a plain intimation that till then we ſhall not be ſatisfied. From different paſſages of Scripture, we collect that the happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſeeing God, in participating his likeneſs, in being ſatisfied with it. But how ſhall this bleſſedneſs be perfected hereafter, if the deſire, if the endeavour, does not originate here? If there be no preliminary acquaintance begun with him who ranſomed us with his blood, can we expect to dwell with him in eternal glory? "Not to know God" is the portentous omen of being "puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from his preſence." It is unſpeakably diſtreſſing to apprehend, that this may poſſibly be the awful deſcription of ſome, who are by no means deſtitute of credit or character; who go on without ever entertaining a conception, that ſuch a beginning may be connected with ſuch an end.

All

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All the delineations of future misery, all the pictures of a disturbed imagination, all the terrors with which a restless conscience anticipates its torments, all the accumulated images by which Revelation describes it, whether under the figure of the fire that is never quenched, or the worm that never dies, are but inferior degrees of this terrible climax, "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord!" All the doleful conceptions of unimaginable woe, all the shades and shapes of substantial, unutterable wretchedness, are comprized in this hopeless everduring exile. What the soul suffers, there is no attempt to describe, what it loses is but faintly presented to the imagination. On the other hand, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived," the final state of bliss. And it is observable that the two extremes are both most emphatically conveyed by negatives. We are only assured that assimilation with God is the perfection of joy, banishment from his presence the extremity of woe.

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There is nothing that more humbles and abaſes the eſtabliſhed Chriſtian, than that, whilſt in his happier moments, he is able to figure to himſelf a cheering image of the glory of the Redeemer, the bleſſedneſs of the redeemed, the beauty of Chriſtian perfection; to feel himſelf not only awakened, but exalted, not merely enlightened, but kindled, almoſt poſſeſſing, rather than anticipating, heaven; while he is enabled, in a joyful meaſure, to meditate upon theſe things, to feel his mind ennobled, and his ſoul expanded by the contemplation, yet to find how ſoon the bright ideas fade, the ſtrong impreſſion is effaced, the heavenly viſion vaniſhed: he mourns to reflect, that he does not more abidingly poſſeſs in his heart, that he does not more powerfully exhibit in his converſation, more forcibly diſplay in his life, that ſpirit of which his heart was lately ſo full, of which his mind was ſo enamoured. Caſt down by theſe reflections, he ſtill learns—painful leſſon!—that "thoſe *muſt* ſow in tears who would reap in joy;" that

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that it is not expectation, but poſſeſſion, which excludes all ſenſe of ſorrow; that it is heaven itſelf, and not the promiſe of it, that is to "wipe all tears from our eyes." His happineſs in this life will, on theſe accounts, be as far below perfection, as his goodneſs; and when we ſpeak of his joy and felicity, it muſt be underſtood, rather of a comparative, than an abſolute happineſs. It is the joy of hope rendered ſure by faith. The ſoul will not be completely bleſſed till the body is diſanimated, its temptations removed, and its infirmities at an end.

The Chriſtian, as life wears away, muſt not be diſcouraged, if he feel not always thoſe fervors, which once appeared to him inſeparable from real piety. It is not, perhaps, that his piety is leſs ſincere, but that years and infirmity, which have impaired his natural energy of character, may affect or ſeem to affect the livelineſs of his devotion; but it may be mellowed, without being decayed; he will not too much diſtreſs him-

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ſelf by miſtaking that, for a diminution of grace, which may be only a wearing out of nature. Or it may be, that the principle, which is become habitual, may not for that very reaſon ſtrike the mind ſo forcibly as on its more early adoption, yet it may have ſunk deeper into his heart. There may be more *proportion* in his religion; all its component parts may be more balanced: there is more evenneſs in his character; more virtues, but of a leſs oſtenſible kind, are collected into it than he formerly thought neceſſary. His piety is at once more ſolid, and more ſpiritual, more operative, yet more ſerene. His principles have ſomewhat of a different call for their exerciſe: the efforts he formerly made to reſiſt temptations of a bolder character, are now exerted to repel the incurſions of peeviſhneſs, the allurements of indolence, the murmurs of impatience. Qualities which he once relinquiſhed to the unconverted, as thinking them merely natural, he now carefully cheriſhes. Cheerfulneſs, once conſidered as the mere flow of animal

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animal ſpirits, is cultivated as a Chriſtian grace; for it does not now ſpring from nature, but triumphs over it.

He is not ſo eager in ſupport of ſome particular opinions as formerly, becauſe each doctrine now maintains its proper place and due importance in his mind. If he make religion leſs a ſubject of diſcuſſion, he truſts it is become a more practical principle. His views are more deep, his judgment more juſt, his convictions more firmly rooted. There is a finer edge to his virtues, for they are now ſheathed in humility; and this quality, the crowning point, and ſoundeſt evidence of a renovated mind, by rendering him more diſtruſtful of himſelf, more candid in his opinions, and more temperate in his language, will have checked that forwardneſs of debate, raſhneſs of deciſion and impatience with error, which, with the leſs enlightened, might formerly have given him the appearance of a more animated Chriſtian.

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But the more his character improves, the more he looks out of himself for his final happiness. His trust in his Redeemer increases in exact proportion to those virtues of which that trust is the source, virtues on which too many others invite him to rest his dependance.

Some Christians, in their outset, are disposed to lay an almost exclusive stress on duties, without sufficiently cultivating the spirit which should prompt them; others too much overlook duties, relying on certain fervors for supplying their place. The established Christian is careful never to relax in duties, even though they are not attended with that energy which once gave more animation to the exercise. There may be in them a less sensible acting of the affections, which are naturally more alive in the active season of life, yet without any diminution of the real principle of piety; there will be rather an increased devotedness, an augmented acquiescence of the will, a more complete conse-

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conſecration of heart and ſpirit, to the only legitimate object of their entire affection.

He will, however, be ſolicitous, that if the flame emit not ſuch vivid flaſhes, as when it was firſt lighted, yet that it ſhall burn more ſteadily, more equably; eſpecially will he be vigilant, that he do not inſenſibly transfer to other objects that ardour which uſed to give life and ſpirit to his piety, and that while he fears he is not ſo much alive to God, it is becauſe he is more alive to the world. Though others cannot fairly judge of his internal ſtate, yet there is this ſure teſt by which he will judge himſelf: if the natural tempers be not more ſubdued, if the iraſcible paſſions retain their vehemence, if pride and ſelfiſhneſs maintain their ſway, while the religious feelings alone are grown obtuſe; it is an alarming ſymptom, a plain intimation, that religion has indeed loſt, or rather, it is to be feared, that it never had obtained the ſupreme place in his heart.

And as he has obſerved, that in ſome vehement characters the lamp of religious fer-

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vour was firſt kindled by the fire of natural paſſions, ſo its flame declines with the declenſion of the natural powers. He is alſo aware, that there is a poſſibility to the Chriſtian, as he advances in years, of a growing ſupineneſs, the too natural effect of which is a decay of the vital ſpirit of religion. This makes him tremble when he reflects that the ſame awful warning which, in the viſion of the Apocalypſe, "the ſpirit gives to the churches," is addreſſed with equal emphaſis to every individual Chriſtian. He remembers that this compaſſionate ſpirit, which ſuccours us when tempted, ſtrengthens us when perſecuted, intercedes for us when afflicted, has promiſed no ſuch ſoothing tenderneſs under declining piety. His language to the decaying Chriſtian, as well as to the lukewarm church, is that of alarming menace. This gradual apoſtacy is the only caſe, becauſe it is a hopeleſs one, in which he threatens final rejection. It is, indeed, infinitely grievous, when they, whom this bleſſed ſpirit has enlightened, in whom he

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has excited devout diſpoſitions and holy tempers, viſibly ſink below the ſtate in which they once ſtood. In the volume of inſpiration, every complaint, every expoſtulation, every argument which long-ſuffering goodneſs could ſuggeſt, every entreaty which inſulted mercy could deviſe, is exhauſted; nothing is omitted which can invigorate relaxing principle, nothing is neglected which can re-animate decaying piety.

The advanced Chriſtian, therefore, will guard againſt the too natural deluſion of impoſing on himſelf the belief, that a declenſion in ſpiritual vigour is only natural decay. But he will guard againſt it, by watching its ſenſible and viſible effects. He will diſcern, whether he ſets leſs value on the things which are paſſing away; whether his attachment to the world diminiſhes, while his prayers for its proſperity and improvement increaſe; whether he is as zealous in promoting good works by his purſe and his influence, as he was, in the days of

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of health and ſtrength, by his perſonal exertions.

The confirmed Chriſtian exemplifies the emphatical deſcription of the good man in Scripture, "he *walks* with God." He does not merely approach him at ſtated times; he does not ceremoniouſly addreſs him on great occaſions only, and then retreat, and dwell at a diſtance; but he *walks* with him, his habitual intercourſe, his natural motion, his daily converſe, his intimate communication, is with his Redeemer: and he remembers that walking not only implies intercourſe, but progreſs. His graces, if not more ſincere, are more univerſal; he knows, and he endeavours to act upon the knowledge, that a Chriſtian muſt be holy in "all manner of converſation;" that excellences in ſome part of his character will not atone for allowed defects in any.

In the ſtill remaining varieties of this changing ſcene, not knowing to what particular trials he may yet be called, he will have endeavoured to bring a general pre-

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paredneſs of ſpirit to every event. When he can no longer *do* the will of God by his accuſtomed exertions, he can, with a ſubmiſſion which is worn into a habit, *ſuffer* it. That which is the crime of an ordinary man, is his higheſt attainment. *He can ſubmit to be uſeleſs.* He will cheerfully reſign himſelf to be diſcharged from ſervices, in which his former happineſs had conſiſted. He will contentedly ſee himſelf laid by, though ſtill ſtout in heart, and firm in ſpirit. He will kindly aſſiſt thoſe who are riſing up to fill the place which he is about to leave vacant, by his counſel, his experience, his prayers. He can rejoice, that though the ſervant fails, the ſervice is, and will be ſupplied.

He will continue more aſſiduouſly to labour after that conſiſtency of character, which is a more unequivocal evidence of high Chriſtian attainment, than the moſt prominent great qualities, which are frequently counteracted by their oppoſites. This conſiſtency exhibits a more ſtriking conformity to the image of his Maker; as in the works of

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of creation, the wiſdom of the Supreme Intelligence is more admirable in the agreement and harmony of one thing with another, than in the individual beauty and excellence of each. It is more conſpicuous, in the fitneſs and proportion of its parts relatively, than in the compoſition of the parts themſelves. By this uniformity, the reſults of religion are the moſt beautifully exhibited in the Chriſtian character.

And as a real Chriſtian is, allowing for human infirmity, conſiſtent with himſelf; ſo the ſame conſiſtency is diſcoverable in the general features of all Chriſtians. However men may differ in their natural character, yet there is, in all true believers, a ſort of correſpondent feeling, as well as common principle, which draws their affections to each other, as well as their hearts and faculties to one common ſource and centre. It is not a traditionary religion which attracts them to the faith of their anceſtors, nor is it a party-feeling which attaches them to ſome particular ſociety, but it is a divinely infuſed

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infuſed principle, communicated by the ſpirit of God; it is identified in all its eſſentials; and a genuine Chriſtian is radically the ſame being, wherever he is found, and under whatever difference of circumſtances he exiſts.

The nearer he approaches to God, the more, in one ſenſe, he will be ſenſible of his diſtance from him. Higher views of God's unſpeakable holineſs, a deeper ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, act reciprocally, and confirm each other. Yet this growing conſciouſneſs of his diſtance only ſerves to augment his love. He more and more feels the goodneſs of God, in having never caſt off human nature, in having, immediately on its apoſtacy, conceived the gracious deſign to repair its evils, and reſtore its dignity. He feels, in its full force, that unſpeakable conſolation which the diſciples of the moſt ſublime of all the Pagan philoſophers lamented was wanting in their religion; they regretted that *between the pure divinity and the impure creature, as there is no union, ſo there*

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there can be no communion. Can any thing more ſtrikingly demonſtrate how completely the Mediator provides for that want, and eſtabliſhes that communion? "It is thus," as a very learned and pious writer has obſerved, "that the Goſpel doctrine gives full relief of mind and eaſe of conſcience, as well as encouragement to piety, and diſcouragement to ſin *." It gives not only future hope, but preſent peace; it is not all in promiſe, it is much in hand.

Through the ſilent, but effectual, operations of grace, obedience is become acquieſcence, duty is transformed, not only into aſſent, but choice. If even a heathen could ſay, Lead me to whatſoever I am appointed, and I will *follow thee, but if I am unwilling, ſtill I will follow thee*, no wonder if the confirmed Chriſtian ſerves God not ſo much becauſe he is bound to ſerve him, as becauſe love is the dictate of his heart, affection the voluntary bent of his diſpoſition. He needs no extraneous attraction, the impulſe is from

* John Smith.

within

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within. The raw recruit requires to be allured by the "fife and ſpirit-ſtirring drum," but the veteran ſoldier follows the ſervice becauſe he loves it, follows it for its own ſake. There is no longer any violence done to nature, for the nature is made conformable to the object; the love of Chriſt conſtrains him, contrary principles are reconciled, oppoſite propenſities are blended into one, and that one a bleſſed, though ſtill imperfect, conformity to the image and the will of God. The more his perceptions are cleared and his will purified, the more his faith ſtrengthens; the more ſimple his views become, the more his thoughts and affections reduce themſelves to that one central point, where alone perfection reſides.

As he has long obſerved that the ſcheme, the ſhew, the faſhion of this life paſſes away, ſo he does not forget, that his own progreſs keeps pace with the world, that he alſo is paſſing away with it. Fluctuation, viciſſitude, and decay, form the very characters of our being. "Nothing continueth in

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in one ſtay." Surely theſe perpetual intimations of Scripture were intended for a conſtant memento, that fondneſs for things ſo tranſitory, is as ill ſuited to their value as diſproportioned to their duration. Theſe conſtant admonitions inculcate temperance in our joy, and moderation in our ſorrow. They teach us to rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not. Whatever is vain in the end, renders all reference to its intermediate courſe comparatively vain alſo.

The Chriſtian obſerves the world around him to be moſt careful about the things which will end at death; his care is chiefly confined to the things which then begin; and as it is not ſo much to aſcertain the time, as to ſecure the conſequences of death, that he has been anxious, death can never properly be ſaid to be ſudden to him, who always knew that the event was as certain as the period was uncertain. But he does not convert the ſhadows of death into ſuch a thick and ſubſtantial cloud, as ſhall prevent

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vent the mental eye from piercing through it, and ſeeing the glory beyond it. Through this deep, but pervious gloom, the bright proſpect opens to that ſtate, a glimpſe of which, caught by the eye of faith, has, in all ages, enabled the ſincere Chriſtian to work through all his earthly difficulties; as it has ſtrengthened him to encounter, with holy hope and humble confidence, the trials of life, ſo he truſts it will ſuſtain him in his laſt conflict with the terrors of death. "Let me now," ſays he, "act as ſeeing him who is inviſible, borne up by the promiſes of the Goſpel, and ſtrengthened by the eternal Spirit, let me anticipate my heaven, burſt my preſent narrow bounds, ſhake off the incumbrance of body, annihilate a diſtance in itſelf ſo ſhort, and make that immortality which is near, preſent."

Thus is the image of divine goodneſs more clearly, though ſtill imperfectly, reflected in the confirmed Chriſtian. The original character of the human heart, as it came from the hands of its Creator, is about to be reinſtated

inſtated in its priſtine purity. Sin, the lawleſs tenant, not the native proprietor of the manſion, will ſoon be totally expelled; in the mean-time, the primitive principle is radicated; the uſurper is dethroned, if not altogether diſpoſſeſſed; he is conquered, if not abſolutely expelled; if he ſometimes diſturb, he can no longer deſtroy. The exile returns to his forſaken home, the prodigal to his father's houſe, the pardoned penitent to his God.

THE END.

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